

Amateur

Photographer

Sony A7R II

A pro motorsport photographer finds out if this CSC can replace his DSLR



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FIRST LOOK!

Panasonic Lumix TZ100

One-inch sensor promises best-ever image quality from a superzoom compact

The state of reportage

Stuart Freedman on the world of contemporary photojournalism

Zeiss Milvus

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In this issue

8 Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ100

Andy Westlake tests Panasonic's latest 'travel zoom' compact camera

12 Photo workout

Follow Craig Roberts' photo regime that will help make you a better photographer

29 Empty-handed

Eric Pickersgill recreated scenes of people staring into their smartphones – minus the phone. Karen Sheard asks why

33 Observe and report

Oliver Atwell talks to photojournalist Stuart Freedman about finding his own aesthetic

40 Wildlife watch

Andrew Mason explains how to photograph the capercaille

42 Evening class

Photoshop guru Martin Evening sorts out your photo-editing and post-processing problems

46 Sony Alpha 7R II

Find out how the Sony Alpha 7R II CSC performs at the 6 hours of Bahrain race. Nick Duncan reports

55 Carl Zeiss Milvus 50mm f/1.4

Damien Demolder puts this big, bold, pricey Carl Zeiss lens through its paces

Regulars

3 7 days

23 Inbox

44 Accessories

59 Technical support

84 Final Analysis



I love photography's ability to hold up a mirror to society and say something interesting about the way we live, or at least draw attention to it in a fresh and original way. For example, I suspect we're all aware of how, in the past decade, technology has transformed our culture and how we interact with each other. Mobile phones in particular have enabled us to connect across vast distances, but they also, ironically, isolate us from those

7days

A week in photography

around us. We're increasingly withdrawing into our own bubbles.

Many photographers have attempted to illustrate this phenomenon, but Eric Pickersgill's project (pages 29–31) really struck a chord with me. His reconstructions perfectly highlight the antisocial side of these most social of gadgets. They have made me think about my own behaviour and inspired me to turn the phone off once in a while. Photography is indeed a powerful tool.

Nigel Atherton, Editor

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ONLINE PICTURE OF THE WEEK



Kilchurn Castle, Loch Awe

by Paul Cronin

Canon EOS 5DS, 16-35mm, 13secs at f/16, ISO 200

'Having spent a few very indifferent days in Glencoe recently, I decided to scout a new location, as rain was forecast in the Highlands all day,' says Paul Cronin. 'Kilchurn Castle – a four-storey tower built in the 1400s – was my choice for a first visit.'

'This is an incredibly small area, located on Loch Awe. I think this location and composition was my favourite, although it was extremely boggy. Next time I'll try to isolate a few trees within the frame.'

'It rained and rained until late afternoon and, as I was getting ready to pack up, something strange happened. It went deadly quiet and the most glorious light and beautiful reflections appeared, with the mist gently rolling along the back of the castle.'

'It was time to get back to standing in the water and admiring the beauty unfold in front of me. Even though I was sopping wet, I was pleased that Mother Nature gave me five minutes of her time to tell this small story.'

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CD/DVD Send us a disc of high-resolution JPEG, TIFF or PSD images (at least 2480 pixels along its longest length), with a contact sheet, to the address on page 24.

Via our online communities Post your pictures into our Flickr group, Facebook page, Twitter feed, or the gallery on our website. See details above.

Transparencies/prints Well-packaged prints or slides (without glass mounts) should be sent by Special Delivery, with a return SAE, to the address on page 24.

NEWS ROUND-UP

The week in brief, edited by Chris Cheeseman

Handy flash bounce card

Manfrotto has launched a pocket-sized flash bounce card, designed to attach to all standard flashguns for a softer light. Aimed at beginners and 'advanced hobbyists', the foldable bounce card attaches to a flashgun via the supplied silicon strap. The white surface measures 18x19cm when open, and closes to a third of its original size when folded away for storage. The Lastolite by Manfrotto EzyBounce Bounce Card costs £24.95. Visit www.manfrotto.co.uk/nbsp-fbz209.



THOMAS RUMMEL



Red Cross winners

Britain's young photographers were recognised at London's Palace of Westminster where winners of the 2015 Red Cross Humanitarian Citizen Awards were announced. Mario Barriocanal, 24, was named winner of the age 18-25 category with a portrait praised for its 'great colours and composition' (above). Maud Lewis, 13, scooped the 17-and-under category in the Canon-backed contest.



Leica enhances SL

Leica promises improved image quality and better handling of the SL with manual lenses via a new firmware update. Billed features of Leica SL firmware update 1.2 include optimisation of picture quality at ISO 50-400. Leica says it has also boosted image quality of the EVF. For full details visit [owners.leica-camera.com/en/login](http://leica-camera.com/en/login).

Jessops opens Cambridge shop

Jessops has opened a new shop in Cambridge. The shop, at 15 Fitzroy Street, offers training courses and an on-site lab for photo products within the hour. Customers can also expect rental and trade-in services, plus sensor-cleaning. The opening came just days after Jessops opened a new shop in Exeter, Devon.



ANDREW DODD



WEEKEND PROJECT

Visit a photo exhibition

Whether you're new to photography or see yourself as an old hand, mastering photography - like so many other crafts - is a constant learning curve. While there's no substitute for getting out there with your camera and practising your craft, you can also learn a great deal from the work of others.

While this can be easily done by flicking through the pages of AP, by browsing the work of someone you're interested in online, or leafing through a decent photobook, the best way for many is to see a photographer's work up close in a gallery, where you'll really be able to appreciate the finished print.

With so many galleries and dedicated exhibitions across the country showcasing photography, why not visit one this weekend?

1 If you're visiting London, there are a wealth of photography galleries to choose from, including The Photographers' Gallery, Beetles+Huxley, Michael Hoppen, Photofusion and the NPG's photography collection.

2 Outside the capital, the likes of the Royal Photographic Society in Bath, Somerset, the Joe Cornish Gallery in North Yorkshire and the Open Eye Gallery in Liverpool are all good starting points.

Correction

In a review on page 49 of AP 12 December 2015, we inadvertently used the wrong product name. The item tested was, in fact, the Leef iAccess iOS Micro SD card reader, rather than the Leef iBridge as stated. Apologies for any confusion caused.



BIG picture

Kashmiri mourners attend the funeral of a pro Kashmir rebel

Documentary photography and reportage have often faced criticism for aesthetising the hardship and suffering of others. However, many photographers believe that to deliver a message effectively, an image must have photographic value. This photograph is a case in point: pictured are Kashmiri mourners in Vejbeour, an area 28 miles south of Srinagar in India, carrying the body of Adil Sheikh, a local pro Kashmir rebel killed in a gun battle with Indian government forces.

Thousands of Kashmiri Muslims attended the funeral procession of three pro Kashmir rebels of Hizbul Mujahideen, the largest militant outfit in Indian-administered Kashmir. The image, taken by Getty photographer Yawar Nazir, is a clear case of a photograph that is both strikingly beautiful and informative.

Words & numbers

The camera sees more than the eye, so why not make use of it?

Edward Weston
American photographer
1886-1958

This image shows the work of South African photographer Zanele Muholi, who explores race, gender and sexuality in post-apartheid South Africa, which was on show at the Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool



©PHU MAHALIS

3 Some of the big shows will also tour other venues across the UK, so keep a lookout for news of upcoming exhibitions in your area. Get up & go on the next page will highlight some of the key shows for you.

4 You may find venues and businesses near you that showcase photography. These can be anything from cafés to lobbies, where work is rotated on a regular basis – it's a great way to celebrate local artists.

11,000

Photos in the private collection of Michael G Wilson, co-producer of many of the James Bond films

Nikon reveals 'pro-level' D500 as new DX DSLR flagship



The new Nikon DX-format series flagship is smaller and lighter than the D5

Nikon has announced the long-awaited successor to the D300S in the shape of the D500 alongside a new professional flagship, the D5. The new Nikon DX-format-series flagship boasts a 153-point Multi-Cam 20K AF system – as featured on the D5 – but in a smaller and lighter body.

'The benefits of the DX-format are evident for long-distance applications such as wildlife and sports photographers, where telephoto ability is at a premium and weight-reduction is welcome,' read a statement released by Nikon US.

Although aimed at 'advanced enthusiasts and professional photographers', amateurs may have to wait to get hold of the 20.9-million-pixel camera when it goes on sale in March, priced £1,729.99 (body only).

'Due to the anticipated high demand for this new flagship DX DSLR, we will be prioritising pre-orders placed by Nikon Professional Services members and Nikon Professional Users,' revealed Simon Iddon, head of product management at Nikon UK.

As the successor to the D300S, which was launched in September 2009, the D500 sits above the Nikon D7200.

As on the D5, the D500 carries a Nikon Expeed 5 image processor, designed to enable it to shoot a continuous burst at up to 10fps.

Key features also include SnapBridge – technology designed

to let the user link the D500 with smart devices via Bluetooth and Wi-Fi more easily.

ISO sensitivity of 100–51,200 is extendable to 50–1,640,000, and the 153-point autofocus system includes 99 cross-type sensors.

The Nikon D500 also supports 4K UHD movie recording (30p/25p/24p), with the option to generate 4K UHD timelapse footage in-camera.

The D500 sports a 3.2in, 2.4-million-dot touchscreen – similar to the Nikon D5 but of the tilting type. It weighs around 860g body only, with battery and XQD memory card. The D500 also accepts SD,

SDHC and SDXC cards.

Meanwhile, the new full-frame D5 – announced alongside the D500 at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas – features an astonishing maximum ISO of 3,280,000 (see next week's AP for details).

● The DX newcomer will also be available as a £2,479.99 kit, which includes a Nikon AF-S 16–80mm f/2.8–4G VR ED lens.

What is SnapBridge?

The D500 enables photographers to share their images using SnapBridge, billed as a 'Bluetooth low-energy system' for 'always-on sharing'. Nikon cameras can pair with smart devices using the downloadable SnapBridge software application, available for Apple and Android operating systems.

Announcing SnapBridge, Nikon claimed: 'SnapBridge via Bluetooth low energy enables the continuous and immediate transfer of images from the camera to a smart device as they are captured in real time, transforming photography into a social, connected experience. This is achieved automatically, without the need to activate image transfer from the camera, while also keeping power consumption low for both devices. Users can also continue to enjoy mobile internet connectivity during image transfer, allowing them to check their email or access social media while syncing their photographs.'



The D500 is aimed at advanced enthusiasts as well as professionals



Free access to London show

THE LATEST camera gear is set to be showcased at a trade show, which takes place in London from 22–24 January. The event is part of The Societies' Photographic Convention and Trade Show, which opens on 20 January.

The trade show element, which runs from 22–24 January, is free to enter for visitors who register before 15 January. Otherwise, entry costs £10.

More than 150 exhibitors, including major industry players, are expected at the event, which promises special deals on products.

The show will also feature masterclasses, hands-on seminars and workshops, with tickets priced from £50 for a masterclass day pass.

The Societies' Photographic Convention and Trade Show takes place at the Hilton Metropole, London.

For full details, visit www.swpp.co.uk/convention.



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These are the first Nikkor lenses to boast Nikon's new stepping motor

Nikon debuts two zooms

NIKON has unveiled two new 18-55mm DX-format zoom lenses optimised for videographers, the AF-P DX Nikkor 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6G VR and AF-P DX Nikkor 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6G – the first Nikkor lenses to boast Nikon's new stepping motor. The lenses are due in shops next month, priced at £199.99 and £149.99 respectively.

The newcomers are also the first Nikon lenses allowing users to switch between AF and manual focus, or turn VR on and off, via the camera menu. At the time of writing, this feature was only compatible with the D5500, D5300 and D3300. The lack of switches on the lens barrel should mean users do not accidentally change settings ahead of their intended shot.

The stepping motor is built to allow quiet, fast focusing when shooting video. Nikon claims: 'When shooting video

footage, the motor allows you to smoothly shift focus from subject to subject with practically no drive noise. Footage shot won't be ruined by any tiny, but still audible, sounds of the lens focusing.'

Nikon UK's head of product management, Simon Iddon, said both lenses are designed to offer enthusiast and entry-level users a 'more natural way to shoot with the lightweight build and improved portability'.

He added: 'The autofocus is now faster and quieter than ever due to Nikon's stepping motor, while the image quality continues to be first class.'

'Whether you're using the 18-55mm lenses to shoot film or take photos, you're guaranteed superb image quality and a convenient, reliable companion for your DSLR.'

Olympus reveals 300mm f/4 IS Pro

OLYMPUS has unveiled the 300mm f/4 IS Pro, touted as the world's most compact, lightweight telephoto lens. The company claims the 1.4-metre close-focusing distance makes it ideal for professionals seeking 'top-notch lenses that match the usability of their small-format, Micro Four Thirds cameras'. It also states that, when attached to the OM-D E-M1 or OM-D E-M5 Mark II, for example, an AF speed of under 300ms is possible.

Olympus sets great store by the compact quality of the lens, which measures 227mm in length. Billed as dustproof, freeze proof and splashproof, the 300mm f/4 IS Pro



includes six-step image stabilisation, while in 35mm terms the focal length equates to a 600mm lens.

The lens, due out in the spring, is priced at £2,199.99. The announcement coincided with the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, USA.

For the latest news visit www.amateurphotographer.co.uk

Get up & go

The most interesting things to see, do and to shoot this week. By Tom Smallwood



© JOHN HUMPHREYS/P

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Macro and art photography workshop

This sensibly priced one-day course on artistic macro skills is run by the Royal Photographic Society (members £33, non-members £45). John Humphrey FRPS will suggest practical ways to unleash your creative potential in macro and art photography, and will discuss editing and presentation techniques.

3 February, <http://bit.ly/rpsmacro>

WORLDWIDE



Food photography

Entries for the Pink Lady Food Photographer of the Year close on 7 February. Categories range from 'Food for Celebration' to 'the Politics of Food'.

Until 7 February, www.pinkladyfoodphotographeroftheyear.com

LINCOLN



Photo walk

All levels are welcome to this photo walk around Lincoln's awe-inspiring cathedral, concluding in the refectory/cloisters for a review and Q&A.

27 February and 19 March, www.lincolnshirephototraining.com

LONDON



LONDON

Norman Parkinson

A major exhibition of Norman Parkinson's work will go on show at Eleven gallery in London. The exhibition focuses on his work for *Vogue* and reveals how his images took fashion photography beyond the still formality of his predecessors.

17 February–24 March, Elevenfineart.com

© PHOTOFEST © LINCOLNSHIRE PHOTO TRAINING © PETER WATKINS

WORLDWIDE



Antonio Gomez

Support Antonio Gomez's goal of producing a fine-art photography book on charreada, the Mexican version of rodeo. 'More than the national sport of Mexico, it is something that evokes enormous pride in all Mexicans, no matter where they live. Charreada considers etiquette just as important as athletic agility,' he explains. <http://bit.ly/mexicanrodeo>

Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ100

Andy Westlake takes a look at Panasonic's latest 'travel zoom' compact, which sports a 1in sensor for improved image quality



TEN years ago Panasonic launched a whole new class of camera in the form of the Lumix DMC-TZ1 'travel zoom', which managed to combine a long zoom lens with a relatively pocketable form. It has dominated the market for such cameras ever since, progressively extending the zoom range and adding features. Its most recent models, the TZ60 and TZ70, added such desirable extras as electronic viewfinders and raw-format recording, and were some of the best-selling cameras of 2014 and 2015 respectively.

The problem with this camera type has generally been that fitting a long zoom into a small body requires the use of a tiny 1/2.3in sensor, compromising

image quality, so the cameras have primarily been pitched at casual photographers rather than enthusiasts.

With its latest model Panasonic has addressed this head-on, by using the much larger 1in sensor seen in many recent compacts. This means that, at a stroke, the TZ100 becomes the best travel zoom model we've seen yet.

Features

At the core of the TZ100 is the familiar 20.1-million-pixel, 1in sensor that has found its way into a lot of cameras over the past couple of years. However, while these have had either a short zoom in a small body, or a long zoom in a large SLR-like body, Panasonic has managed

USB charging

A flap on the side conceals HDMI and USB connectors. The latter can be used to charge the battery.

Colour options

Alongside the all-black model, an unusual 'silver' version with a distinctive red accent will be available.

At a glance

- 1in, 20.1-million-pixel sensor
- 25-250mm equivalent f/2.8-5.9 Leica DC lens
- ISO 125-12,800 standard, ISO 80-25,600 extended
- 1.16-million-dot electronic viewfinder
- 1.04-million-dot 3in touchscreen
- 250fps/25fps video recording and 4K Photo
- Available in March, priced £529

to fit a 10x 25-250mm equivalent zoom lens in a camera that's barely larger than its existing small-sensor models, at 110.5x64.5x44.3mm and weighing 312g (in effect, the protruding section of the lens barrel is about 1cm deeper). With a decent wideangle-to-telephoto range, the lens should cover most photographic opportunities. Panasonic's Depth from Defocus technology promises fast autofocus, while hybrid optical/electronic 5-axis image stabilisation is on hand to keep images sharp.

The maximum aperture ranges from f/2.8 at wideangle to f/5.9 at telephoto, via f/4 at 70mm and f/5.6 at 180mm equivalent. This means that the FZ100 won't be such as good a choice for



Alongside the all-black model, this unusual 'silver' version of the TZ100 will also be available

low-light shooting as cameras like the Canon PowerShot G5 X with its 24–100mm equivalent f/1.8–2.8 lens, or the rather larger Sony Cyber-shot DSC-RX10 II with its 24–200mm equivalent f/2.8 optic. It's the major price you pay for fitting an extensive zoom range into a relatively small camera.

Like other recent TZ models, the TZ100 has an electronic viewfinder tucked away at the top left of its body. With its 1.16-million-dot resolution, the EVF is acceptably sharp but not very large, giving something of a 'postage stamp at the end of a tunnel' experience. It's about the only disappointing aspect of the camera and I would have been happier to see a larger viewfinder on board, even at the expense of increased size and price.

On the back is a 3in LCD, and in a very welcome move Panasonic has added touch sensitivity. This enables AF area selection by touch, even with the camera held to your eye, and several 4K-related tricks along with Panasonic's usual excellent touch interface. Unfortunately, the screen isn't articulated, which is bad news for selfie-lovers. However, Wi-Fi is built in for remote control of the camera and image sharing. Other features include a small pop-up flash and in-camera raw development.

4K features

PANASONIC considers 4K video recording to be one of its core technologies, and has included it on the TZ100. Movies can be recorded at 3840x2160-pixel resolution and 30 or 25fps, or at full HD (1920x1080 pixels). Sound is recorded using built-in stereo mics. One neat new feature is '4K live cropping', which allows footage to be recorded as a full HD-size crop from the 4K stream, which can be zoomed or panned around the image area using the touchscreen without having to move the camera. Panasonic has also thrown in its latest 4K Photo mode, allowing easy extraction of 8-million-pixel still images from bursts recorded at 30fps and saved as MP4 files. In a slightly more gimmicky fashion, there's also Panasonic's latest 4K Post Focus mode, which records a series of frames at different focus distances as a movie file and then allows refocusing after the event.

Panasonic reveals TZ80 travel zoom

PANASONIC has also launched the Lumix DMC-TZ80, essentially an updated version of last year's TZ70. It uses a new 18-million-pixel, 1/2.3in sensor that Panasonic says should give improved image quality at high sensitivity settings, and, together with the new Venus Engine processor, also enables 4K video recording. The other major change is the addition of touch sensitivity to the 3in, 1.04-million-dot LCD, which facilitates additional features such as 30fps

4K burst shooting and 4K post focus. Depth from Defocus technology promises faster autofocus.

The TZ80 uses the same 24–720mm equivalent 30x zoom lens as the TZ70, with 5-axis hybrid image stabilisation. The body is essentially unchanged, with its fixed LCD and corner-mounted 1.160-million-dot electronic viewfinder.

Available from mid-February for £359, the TZ80 will come in either all-black or silver-and-black finishes.



Panasonic's new TZ80 costs £359

Premium telephoto 100–400mm lens

PANASONIC'S third new product is a premium telephoto zoom for Micro Four Thirds cameras. The Leica DG 100–400mm f/4.6–3.0 OIS is a weather-sealed, optically stabilised lens with a 200–400mm equivalent range. With silent autofocus and a stepless aperture mechanism, it's optimised for both stills and movie shooting, including 4K. It's also compatible with the Lumix DMC-GX8's dual IS system.

Measuring 171.5x83mm and weighing less than 1kg, the lens is relatively compact considering its lengthy zoom range. Its optical formula consists of 20 elements in 13 groups, and the filter thread measures 72mm. The lens has a built-in tripod mount ring with a detachable foot. It will be available in March, priced £1,349.



Panasonic's new lens is optimised for both stills and movie shooting



Viewpoint

Jon Bentley

Are you worried about losing all your digital photographs if your hard drives or other storage devices fail? If you are, perhaps the world of TV has the answer in the form of LTO

There's been much talk on these pages about the challenges we face in keeping our digital photos alive. Failing hard drives and rotting optical discs require constant vigilance, and it's even been said we should print out all our images as the only sure-fire way to ensure their survival.

While worrying about this subject, it occurred to me that the world of TV might provide a solution. The amount of data generated in shooting video is huge, and archive material is a valuable commodity.

I decided to investigate *The Gadget Show*'s workflow. These days, virtually all the show's footage is recorded onto memory cards, which are reused once the material has been copied onto our Avid editing system. As you'd expect, this system includes a server with dozens of spinning hard disks, storing – in this case – well over 100TB of material from various productions at any one time. Footage for one series typically takes around 30TB of this space, and it can be easily and quickly accessed from any of our editing suites.

The archiving process was more surprising. As the footage is ingested, it's also copied onto, of all things, magnetic tape. But not the sort of tape you'd find in an old audio cassette. This is LTO (Linear Tape Open), a modern high-density format with each tape holding up to 2.5TB (6.25TB from next year with the

new LTO 7-standard). Every second of footage is copied twice, both in its native file format – typically XDCAM but also MOV and others – and in the dedicated file format used by our editing system.

Accessing the material from tape is slow, but unlike hard disks the tapes are designed to be left on a shelf and, given reasonable storage conditions, have an expected lifespan of at least 30 years. An entire series can be archived in a fraction of the space occupied by the DigiBeta and DVDCAM rushes tapes of old.

The trouble is, an LTO tape system requires sophisticated software and costs tens of thousands of pounds. However, there is a version of high-density magnetic tape storage that costs vastly less, in the region of £1,000–£1,500. It can be used with a normal PC or Mac in a drag-and-drop fashion, and records onto the same tapes. It's called LTFS or Linear Tape File Storage and I think it has the potential to be the answer to photographers' image-storage needs.

LTFS won't replace the hard drive, but it's reliable, durable, not outrageously expensive and could be the vital extra back-up you need when your hard drives fail. High-tech tape means our precious photos won't be lost forever.

Jon Bentley is a TV producer and presenter best known for *Top Gear* and Channel 5's *The Gadget Show*



Today's high-tech LTO tapes (above) can be stored on a shelf for up to 30 years

Do you have something you'd like to get off your chest? Send us your thoughts in around 500 words to the address on page 24 and win a year's digital subscription to AP, worth £79.99

New Books

The latest and best books from the world of photography. By Oliver Atwell



India

by Steve McCurry, Phaidon, £39.95, 208 pages, hardback, ISBN 978-0-71486-996-4

THERE ARE ample volumes of Steve McCurry's work out there, but that doesn't mean there are too many. Each of his books has a clear identity, and they are always worth perusing to get to grips with the photographer's distinct aesthetic and approach to a landscape and the people who inhabit it. Where other photographers may choose to make certain areas look hellish or grim, McCurry instead chooses to draw out the hidden beauty of a place. As a result, he is able to get to the heart and dignity of the people in question. In this volume, McCurry brings together his best images taken in India – an area he appears to have a natural affinity with. Typically, each frame bleeds with gorgeous colour and, perhaps most importantly, humanity. Collectively, the images create a distinct narrative, one that appears to be full of contradictions, but actually as a whole gives us a living, breathing portrait of a country and community. ★★★★☆

Arctica: The Vanishing North

by Sebastian Copeland, teNeues, £80, 304 pages, hardback, ISBN 978-3-83273-281-3



THE BEST photography offers a document of where we are now, and perhaps even at times sows the seeds of the idea of what we stand to lose. Never is this more apparent than in environmental landscapes, and especially so with the Arctic. The region is a magnificent display of nature's untamed splendour, and it's difficult not to be awed by its overwhelming vastness. However, as we surely all know by now, this is a region that is in real jeopardy. Sebastian Copeland wears many hats, including that of polar explorer, journalist, photographer and environmental activist. It's the combination of these things that makes *Arctica: The Vanishing North*, such a success. The images are exquisite, and while that would usually be enough, it's Copeland's clear, knowledgeable text that really caps it off. A beautiful volume with a melancholic undertone. ★★★★☆



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Photo workout

Start 2016 with a new photo regime that will help make you a better photographer. **Craig Roberts** is your personal trainer

GOING to the gym is all about getting fit, losing weight and inevitably working muscles you've not used for a long time. In the process, you get exercise, lose a few pounds, build up those weak muscles and become physically – and mentally – healthier.

Well, the same ethos can be applied to your photography. So, start the new year with a new regime. It's time to ditch the auto modes weighing you down, and flex your muscles with modes and features you've not used before. It's the perfect way to get photo fit and feeling more confident about your photography.

I'm your personal photography trainer and we are going to exercise your skills by using your camera to its full capabilities with these ten fantastic workouts.

Don't restrict yourself to the extreme ends of the focal range of your lens



Craig Roberts

Craig is a professional photographer specialising in travel and landscape. He regularly writes technique articles for photography magazines and offers these along with videos and eBooks as part of his e6 Subscription available from his website. www.craigrobertsphotography.co.uk

Flex your lens choice

YOU CAN expand your camera's shooting potential, simply by being more flexible with your focal-length choice. Ask yourself, are you using that zoom lens to its full potential? When was the last time you took a telephoto landscape image? Are you really making the most of the widest focal length you have?

You can check the focal length of each image you take simply by looking at the EXIF data. I bet you find that a lot of your images are taken at a similar length. So, to make a change, you could restrict yourself to shooting only at the extreme ends of your zoom lens. Alternatively, if there is a particular focal length that you don't seem to use very often – say, 35mm within your



Get to know your camera's histogram to ensure spot-on exposures

24-105mm zoom – why not restrict yourself to that zoom position only and give it a workout.

To make sure you're not tempted to cheat, you could lightly tape the lens barrel with some masking tape, just to hold it gently at this focal length, and then go out and find subjects to suit this fixed angle of view. It's a good workout for you, too, training your photographic eye to find suitable images and compositions, rather than zooming in and out to suit the subject. It makes you work harder to find those subjects and frame them effectively. Once complete, you should find yourself using your zoom lens in a different and more effective way, making full use of its variable focal-length range, but with a better understanding of the focal length currently in use.

RESULT A good start – you're doing well. Let's move on to the next core skill.

9

Track your exposures with the histogram

JUST like a fitness tracker, you can track your images by using the histogram to make sure your exposures are in great shape and performing at their best.

This great feature allows you to see if your images are correctly exposed or whether they need to be adjusted. Too far to the left means your image may be too dark and not getting enough shadow detail. Too far to the right and it is overexposed and losing detail in the highlights. So, you want to aim to get the histogram biased to the right, resulting in good shadow detail, but not so far that it is clipping (meaning your whites no longer have any detail). Try taking a few images at different exposures and see how the results compare. You'll soon see how the histogram responds in the different results, and with a few adjustments to either the aperture or shutter speed your images will be nicely balanced and fitting fit.

RESULT Another good exercise completed, but there's lots more work to do.

3 Change your white balanced diet

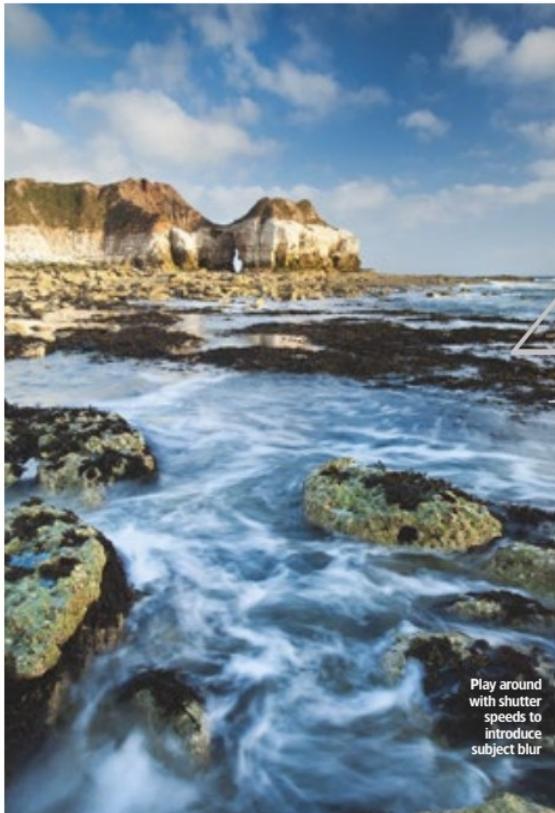
IF YOU are a complete beginner, then chances are you shoot with the camera on the auto white balance setting. While this is a good option, especially as you are getting used to your camera, there are a whole range of settings to choose from and each can form part of a healthy white-balanced diet.

So, start by taking control of your camera and deciding the colour temperature of your images yourself. Let's add some warmth to your images, so try increasing the white balance rating. Anything between 5,500K and 6,500K will add a pleasing warm tone to your images, and if you want to do this quickly and easily select the 'cloudy' or 'shade' setting on your camera. If you shoot raw (more on this later), you can change this when you process your images, and it's a good way to see and understand how the numbers in the Kelvin rating affect your images.

If the camera is set on auto white balance, then morning and evening landscapes will be automatically adjusted. However, this means you may be missing out on some moody, cool-looking tones in your images. Try instead to shoot in the 'sunny', daylight setting to see the real effect. You could then change to the 'tungsten' setting to add a cool tone to your images. This is great for dawn shoots, where any mood can be enhanced. This Tungsten setting can also work really well with modern architecture, complementing a rigid, steel and glass structure to great effect.

So, experiment with all the different white balance settings, see how they can affect your images and vary your diet for creativity.

RESULT We're making good progress now, so let's keep this energy going.



Play around with shutter speeds to introduce subject blur

Don't rely on your camera's auto white balance mode – you could be missing out

4 Lose a few ISO calories

THIS is another setting that you may have placed on auto by default, leaving the camera to decide on the final speed.

However, the camera may not always choose the ideal setting, as it doesn't know your exact shooting situation. This means you may be shooting with too many ISO calories, with your camera selecting ISO 800 when ISO 100 could be more than enough. High ISO settings are ideal for handholding, especially in low light, and can make the difference between a sharp or a blurred image. However, if you are using a tripod, you won't need the fast shutter speeds associated with high ISOs. Placing your camera on a tripod for support is not something your camera will recognise, so you need to tell it that it can now choose a slower shutter speed by changing to a lower ISO. Once you start experimenting with these slower shutter speeds, you'll soon discover a whole new world of creative possibilities opens up, with subject blur starting to play a key part in the composition.

RESULT Great job, but let's take this training up a level. No slacking now!



5

Start training to use manual mode

IF YOU really want to get photo fit, then the best way to shoot is in manual mode. Program and semi-auto modes are great for convenience, but to really take control, train yourself to shoot in full manual mode.

With the dial set to M, you are now in full control and you can use the camera as a finely tuned picture-taking machine. You can start using any aperture you like, or any shutter speed (or combination of both, of course), again using the histogram as your guide and personal trainer. Overexpose, underexpose, bring back the detail in the shadows that the camera hasn't accounted for, or reduce the brightness where the camera has been otherwise fooled.

Of course, manual mode needs time and thought to work with, so it isn't ideal for fast action or when things, such as the light, are changing quickly. However, when you do have the time and want full control of your results, manual mode is ideal for those photographers who really want a workout.

RESULT A tough challenge, but you coped well. This is the midway point, so let's dig deep.

Take full control of your camera with its manual mode for complete creative control

Get to know the quirks of your camera's metering system



Consider breaking the rules of composition occasionally

6

Give compositions a workout

COMPOSITION can make or break an image, and while the rules of composition are an essential guide, there's nothing to stop you breaking them from time to time. Using the same compositions with every image, over and over again, can lead to dull and repetitive images. So, it's important to keep things fresh and give your compositions a good workout.

However, make sure you learn the fundamental rules of composition first and fine-tune these. With that done, you will then be free to flex your composition skills and vision to frame your images to suit the subject. Now you can break the rules occasionally to keep your images fresh and fit.

So, by all means apply the rule of thirds, but alternatively, place your subject dead centre if it works. You might tend to favour the landscape compared to the sky in your frame, but go the other way round if the sky is dramatic enough. It's common to add foreground to help create a sense of depth and balance, but try an image without an obvious foreground if the scene has enough interest on its own. The rules of composition are a guide only, so be flexible and think creatively.

RESULT No one said this was going to be easy, but I'm pleased with your progress.

7 Use different metering modes for their core strengths

JUST like we did when switching to manual mode, you can take more control of your camera and results by using different metering modes. Matrix or evaluative metering has its strengths, but it also has its weaknesses, so using more selective metering modes can be a huge advantage in many situations.

It will depend on your camera make and model, but you may have the option to choose partial-metering or spot-metering modes – or even both. Their core strengths mean they are able to measure a scene in a very precise way, eliminating any distractions that could confuse your camera's overall reading of the scene. If the view is backlit or of high contrast, for instance, evaluative metering can struggle to decide on the most important area to read from. So, if you switch to one of these two alternative metering modes, you can measure the most important part of the scene for a more precise reading. Exercise using these modes a few times in different situations and you'll begin to see the benefits in no time at all.

RESULT You're looking good and we can see the benefits already. Ready for another?

'Try an image without an obvious foreground if the scene has enough interest on its own'

Stay fit with a choice of framing formats

THERE are many framing formats to choose from, so don't use the same one every time. The 35mm digital SLR camera produces an elongated rectangle, so the first alternative to this horizontal view is the vertical format. This emphasises foreground and is great at removing distractions.

Next, a square crop removes tension and suits minimalist views. Using this format will strengthen a bold composition and add calmness and serenity to your images.

Cropping your rectangular images on either end makes them similar to the 5x4in aspect ratio of large-format cameras. This cropped rectangle can be used to trim the composition, keeping it tighter and looking cleaner.

If you want to stretch things out, consider a panoramic crop. This allows a much wider field of view that's ideal for big vistas. However, don't forget to keep your images tight and in shape, as a large empty view without a focal point is soon going to become dull.

RESULT You're on top form, but no time for a rest as there's one more to go.

Manual focus is a great discipline to apply to your photography



8 Get manual-focus fit

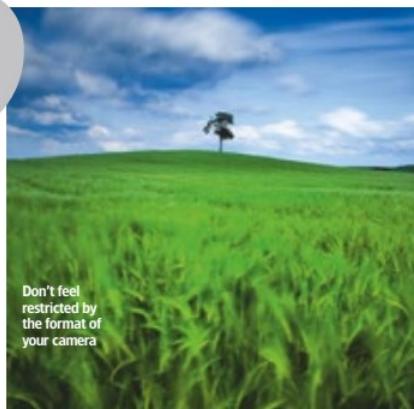
AUTOFOCUS on modern cameras has become an essential feature, and in many cases it is faster and more accurate than our own judgement and reactions. There are times, however, when it too can struggle, or it is simply more convenient to focus ourselves, and this is another feature we should exercise more often.

Autofocus systems can be fooled by distracting objects moving in front of the camera at the wrong time. It can also struggle with low-contrast subjects, or when using certain filters. On these occasions, you might want to switch to manual focus. This also comes into its own when you use a tripod, as you don't have to move the camera to focus and then recompose. If speed isn't of the essence, manual focusing puts us back in control.

Practise your manual-focusing skills, using the zoom feature on live view if necessary, and train yourself not to rely on the camera to focus.

RESULT We're on the home straight now, with just a few more exercises to peak fitness.

9



Don't feel restricted by the format of your camera

Travelling light
with a single
camera and
lens can be
very liberating

10

Lose weight by shooting with one camera and one lens

THERE'S a great advantage to slimming down to the basic kit, and it's one of the best ways to keep your photography finely tuned. This is best done with a prime lens rather than a zoom. The benefit of this is that with minimal kit you have less to carry around, but also fewer options to shoot with. Yet this can be

regarded as a positive, and actually opens up more possibilities, as it keeps your mind sharp and vision well trained. We can easily become bogged down with so much kit that it distracts from our shooting workflow. So if you keep your kit to a minimum, you can carry it for longer without feeling tired. Your mind will be

fired up to spot great images and you'll be on the ball, ready to leap into action.

RESULT You've done it! You're photo fit and ready to take on any subject. Keep up a daily workout with your camera and this will give you a strong and healthy workflow.

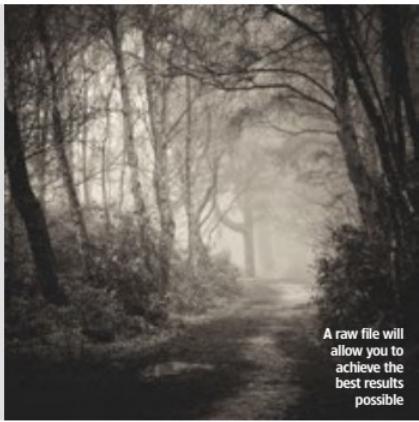
Bonus workout

Shoot raw

YOU'VE earned an extra skill with your hard work, so as a final exercise let's try shooting raw if you haven't done it before. This change to your camera's quality setting can have a huge effect on the outcome of your images.

While JPEGs are the camera's default and most convenient format to shoot in, nothing opens up your camera's potential more than shooting in the raw format. This simply means that your camera has not made any permanent adjustments to the resulting image and you are free to work with a basic but fully detailed image from scratch in post-processing. Make adjustments to exposure, contrast, white balance and colour saturation, and change it to black & white (and then back again if you like), all without sacrificing any of the image file's quality. Not only that, but a raw file can be adjusted to a greater extent without deteriorating to the same extent as a JPEG file.

This is the ultimate workout for your images back home on the computer, so you can carry on where you started off out in the field. Shooting raw is the final core skill and, with this mastered, you are fighting fit and ready for the photographic year ahead.



A raw file will allow you to achieve the best results possible

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The art of movement

In the fourth of our series on shooting video, we look at how to move your **digital film camera** and the equipment you need to do it

It may sound obvious, but one of the first things you need to consider when making the leap from shooting stills to digital film is movement. As a stills photographer your goal is always to capture a single moment in time – the one frame that tells the story best. However, when filmmaking, not only can your subject move but so too can the camera.

Every movement has a different emotional effect. The perspective and the way you move the camera affects how viewers interpret a scene. It can change the perception, the rhythm, the pace and even the emotion of a story.

And it's just as important to know when not to move the camera.

Cinematographers always think about moving the camera, but only when it adds something to the narrative.

Human perspective

Film is different to stills photography because the viewer is the camera. If you are making a wildlife documentary film about foxes and the camera is positioned at head height looking down, the

footage will seem somewhat unremarkable as this is how we typically view foxes. However, just like with stills photography, if you move the camera so it is at eye level with the fox, you instantly change the perspective and put the viewer inside the fox's world. The story takes on a new meaning, and audiences will see things in a completely different light. Move the camera even lower, to ground level, and the fox towers over us – it becomes dominant and powerful. Exactly the same rules apply when you are filming people.

'If it enriches the viewer's experience or holds the viewer's attention, then move the camera'

John Wright

A cage provides a nice grip for handholding a camera, as well as sockets and rails for mounting accessories



Panning

One of the simplest movements you can make is a pan. This is where the camera moves from left to right, or vice versa. Panning shots are a good way to introduce a subject like our fox. You pan across to establish a location and then stop the pan so that the subject rests around a third of the way into the frame.

Crane, jib and boom shots

Crane, jib and boom shots lift or lower the camera, and they are great for allowing the audience to enter or exit a scene. They allow the viewer to look at a scene, then quickly be inserted right into it. For example, at the start of a film a high crane shot above a busy street scene can be used as an establishing shot. Once the location has been established, the camera can be lowered onto the subject, allowing the audience to enter the world of the film. Conversely, at the end of a film we may see the camera raised away from the subject to show them walking off into the distance. As we leave the character's world behind, the audience is pulled out of the narrative, concluding the story.



A slider provides a way to make very smooth and precise camera movements

Shoulder rig ▶

Even a simple shoulder rig can provide a good level of support, especially if you have a large number of accessories attached. One tip is to control your breathing, as this can be noticeable in recorded footage.



Monopod ▶

Many videographers favour a monopod over a tripod, as it can offer good support for static shots but with the flexibility to be used as a stabiliser, or for very high shots that can mimic an image taken with a crane. The weight of a monopod, especially one with feet, can help to act as a counterbalance to smooth any movements when shooting handheld with something like Blackmagic's Pocket Cinema Camera.



Tripod ▶

The most obvious support is a tripod. One of the main differences is the fluid head, which gives you a much smoother-looking image when panning and tilting. Tripods also have leg bracing and usually don't have a centre column, which helps to keep the camera extremely stable.





You don't need to spend a fortune to make use of these types of movements, as a carefully angled and raised monopod can achieve the same sort of effect, but on a smaller scale.

Creating tension

When it comes to adding drama and tension to a scene, the type of movement that you choose can really help. Pushing, or zooming in, to the face of a character who is upset focuses the audience's attention on the emotions of that person. Conversely, if you pull out from a person crying to a wider scene, you can reveal why the person is upset. During the slow pull you create tension as the audience anticipates what is about to be revealed.

Unnatural movement

As much as you should be keeping the camera smooth and steady, sudden jerky movements can be very unsettling, uneasy and unpleasant to watch, which can emphasise such moments in your film. As always, watch your favourite films and look at how the camera moves during certain moments.



John Wright pictured
with the Blackmagic
URSA Mini 4K camera

John Wright

John is a commercial photographer and filmmaker who started shooting films professionally two years ago

'THE ADVICE often given to people who are just starting out shooting digital film is, "Don't move the camera too much." Well, I'd add, "Don't move the camera too much for the sake of it, but if it enriches the viewer's experience or holds the viewer's attention, then move the camera."

I've tried everything, from just handholding the camera to using huge robotic control arms. There are so many great devices on the market to support your camera, but one thing that I have seen used, that works really well, is a standard

monopod. It gives bottom weight and really nice balance. It also offers a steadier, handheld feel.

'When filming, even something as simple as just slightly drifting in and out can engage the viewer a little bit more than a still frame. The role of the camera in my mind is playing the part of a human witness. It's OK to let the camera "breathe", as I call it, to let it just gently float as you handheld it. You want to give the viewer the impression of being there, and those natural slight movements help to do that.'

To see the full interview with John visit www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/blackmagic



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TO COINCIDE with the launch of The Video Mode website, we're pleased to announce our new Amateur Filmmaker of the Year (AFOY) competition. AFOY challenges you to get creative with your filmmaking, and gives you the opportunity to win some fantastic prizes worth £10,000 in total.

The competition is split into three rounds, each with its unique theme: Nature, Time and Love. To enter, submit a video no more than five minutes in length, of HD quality. You can shoot on any camera you'd like, and the content and editing are up to your imagination – so long as it fits

the round's particular theme. Visit www.thvideomode.com to view the top videos, as well as the scores and a leaderboard for the overall competition. The winner will be the person with the most points after three rounds, who will win the overall prize as well as title of Amateur Filmmaker of the Year.

Rounds and dates

Below is a list of the competition rounds, their themes and the dates you need to know. To view the results, visit www.thvideomode.com. When planning your entry, take into consideration the criteria of fulfilling the brief, creativity and technical excellence on which you'll be judged.

| Theme | Opens | Closes |
|-------------------|-------|--------|
| Round One: Nature | 1 Aug | 30 Sep |
| Round Two: Time | 1 Oct | 31 Dec |
| Round Three: Love | 1 Jan | 28 Feb |

The overall winner will be announced in April 2016

Prizes

Enter to win your share of prizes worth over £10 000! Here's what you could receive:

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Round Three

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Canon Cinema EOS C100 Mark II, worth £3,599.99

Visit www.thvideomode.com/afoy3

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Reality check

I felt I had to respond to Richard Smith's letter (*Inbox AP 19-26 December 2015*) about photography's ultimate aim being to represent 'the real'. If our intention is to capture that perfect moment in time, to store it for the future, then yes, real is what we want from our photography. My belief, however, is that is too limiting for the creative power we have in our hands these days.

Our cameras and editing software capabilities have opened up such massive opportunities to exploit our own creative visions that it seems a shame to say that we have to 'keep it real'. I understand the technical relationship between aperture, speed, ISO and so on, I'm comfortable shooting digital, 35mm and medium format, but only recently have I felt that digital, plus the 'digital darkroom', makes creativity so easily accessible to me. I can experiment with intentional camera movements, slow shutter speeds, multiple exposures and get instant feedback. I can look at a raw image and adjust the the temperature of the photograph until it says

something more to me than just a literal interpretation of a scene. In short, and I don't want to sound pretentious, I can use my camera and software to create art.

Now, you might not like my 'art' and I support your right to not like it, but the fact remains that I now have the tools to move beyond the real into the realms of the imagination. And I love it. So, Richard, please don't constrain yourself to what is 'real', use this wonderful, liberating technology to experiment. You'll be surprised by what you can produce.

Chris McPhee, Ontario, Canada

I couldn't agree more, Chris.

Photography can be as much about interpreting the world as recording it. If you're a photojournalist, there's a responsibility to adhere to a certain truthfulness (even then, this can be manipulated according to what is included or excluded), but otherwise it's an artistic medium and there are no rules – **Nigel Atherton, Editor**

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Praktica passion

To anyone acquainted only with digital cameras, some vintage film SLRs must seem like proper old clunkers. Yet Ivor Matanle's glowing opinion of the Praktica L (AP 2 January) tied in perfectly with my own recollections of this fine camera – just one of Praktica's hugely underrated models. Due to the lack of a built-in meter, I used my Praktica L (purchased in 1971) with an old Weston Euro-Master handheld light meter. It lacked an Invercone for incident readings, but worked perfectly with a white cap from a body spray aerosol. Along with

the 50mm standard lens and a Pentacon 135mm, I shot numerous weddings.

Sadly, my beloved Praktica met a grisly end after I dropped it on the stone steps of Grey's Monument in Newcastle. And I'm afraid when I handled a beautiful Olympus OM-1 belonging to a friend I was totally smitten and

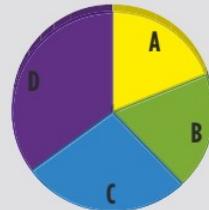
hurried out to buy one. But the Praktica was my first 'proper' camera, which I've never forgotten. Like many Russian cameras of that era, Prakticas gave a lot for very little.

Dave Fowler, Tyne & Wear

Cameras from the Warsaw Pact countries offered an affordable way into 'proper' photography that would otherwise have been beyond many people in the 1970s. Like you, my enthusiasm for mine (a Zenit EM) waned once I experienced the superiority of Japanese engineering (in my case, the original Canon



The Praktica L SLR: a hugely underrated model



In AP 19-26 December we asked
Are you expecting any photography-related gifts this Christmas?

You answered

| | |
|---|-----|
| A Yes, I've been good | 19% |
| B No, I've been bad | 19% |
| C I'll have to wait and see what Santa brings | 27% |
| D Bah Humbug! | 35% |

What you said

'While my nearest and dearest support my hobby, they do not contribute towards the purchase of much-needed equipment despite the hints!'

'I am 71 years old, and the last time anyone gave me anything photography related was 35 years ago when my late father gave me a Praktica LTL. Everything I now own was bought with my own hard-earned cash!'
'My new MacBook Air is sort of photography related as I'll be installing Photoshop and Lightroom on it, so it's a yes, I've been good'

Join the debate on the AP forum

This week we ask

Do you own a mirrorless/CSC camera system or are you planning to buy one this year?

Vote online www.amateurphotographer.co.uk

Guess the camera



Every other week we post a photograph of a camera on our Facebook page and all you have to do is guess the make and model. To guess the make and model of this camera (above), head over to www.facebook.com/Amateur.photographer.magazine. Forum members can also enter via the forum.



The cover published in AP 19-26 December is from 15 March 1986. The winner is John Palmer, whose guess was closest to the correct date.

F1), but it was my Russian 'old clunker' that first sparked my passion for photography
– Nigel Atherton, Editor

Manual settings

Adrian Bonnington's letter (*Inbox*, AP 2 January), and the last sentence of Richard Sibley's helpful reply, prompts the following suggestion: why not have a round in APOY with conditions that the image must have been taken with all exposure settings on manual? By this I mean aperture, shutter speed, sensitivity (now misnamed ISO) and white balance. You could restrict any post-production to cropping, plus small changes in brightness and contrast, irrespective of the original type of image file before conversion to JPEG. I believe this would be the nearest digital equivalent to what was available when printing from a correctly exposed transparency, and an interesting exercise for AP readers who have never bothered to learn the basics of photography and believe that a good knowledge of Photoshop is more important.

It would be interesting to see if you received more, or fewer, than the average number of entries.

Chester Willey, via email



Frank Wood's shot of Thirlmere, taken with his Olympus E-PM1

We talk about raw files being digital negatives, but of course JPEGs are more like transparencies, where the photograph is created entirely in the camera. A manual-mode challenge based around unedited JPEGs straight out of the camera could be an interesting and fun idea
– Nigel Atherton, Editor

Have camera...

Richard Sibley was spot-on with his comment in *Letters* (AP 5 December 2015) on the subject of landscapes when he said, 'One day you can go to a spot and things are perfect, while at other times you have to keep going back...' Thirlmere reservoir in Cumbria is often hopeless for photographs because it is so

obviously man-made with bleached tide marks round the banks where water has been drawn off. One day recently, though, I was passing across the dam on my bike with my Olympus Pen Micro Four Thirds camera in my pocket when I was blown away by a scene above.

The setting sun was picking out the lower slopes of Helvellyn mountain and the water was like glass, with a wispy cloud hanging over the far end of the four-mile long reservoir. As a photographer friend once told me, 'The best camera in the world is the one you have with you.'

Frank Wood, Lancashire

Couldn't agree more!
– Richard Sibley, deputy editor

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Printed in the UK by Pester Group

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, London E14.

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ISSN 0303-1482 (USPS 158-1404) \$29.99 (Europe), \$38.99 (USA), £22.19 (rest of world). The 2016 US annual 12 issue subscription price is \$338.99, air freight and mailing is at the rate charged by Air Business Ltd., c/o Worldwide Shipping Inc., 156-15, 14th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Subscriptions records are maintained by Time Inc. (UK), Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. All rights reserved. Copyright © 2016 Time Inc. (UK). Amateur Photographer, AP, and the Time Inc. (UK) logo are trademarks of Time Inc. (UK).

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In next week's issue

On sale Tuesday 19 January

Bird's-eye view

David Tipling reveals how to make the most of the fabulous opportunities to shoot garden birds



Panasonic 25mm f/1.7

We test the Panasonic Lumix G 25mm f/1.7 Asph fast prime lens for Micro Four Thirds

Canon PowerShot G9 X

Andy Westlake puts Canon's stylish, high-quality compact camera through its paces

Zeiss Milvus 85mm f/1.4

What does the new Zeiss Milvus 85mm f/1.4 lens offer? Damien Demolder finds out

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Street life

Two professional photographers offer their expert advice and tricks of the trade to help you shoot your best-ever street photography images



Kevin Mullins

Kevin is an award-winning documentary wedding photographer based in the west of England (though a proud Welshman). Kevin was one of the first official FUJIFILM X-Photographers and one of the first wedding photographers in the world to embrace the FUJIFILM X-Series professionally. www.f16.click and www.kevinnullinsphotography.co.uk

PROFESSIONAL wedding photographer Kevin Mullins is passionate about street photography, using it to educate and train himself for the style of award-winning wedding photography he shoots.

When it comes to good street photography Kevin is always on the lookout for a few key elements. 'When I'm out shooting on the street, I'm always looking for good light, somewhere with a good composition, while the moment is always critical,' says Kevin. In essence, if you can combine good light, good composition and capture a candid moment in time Kevin reckons, 'If you can

get all of those into one shot, then you've got an award-winning picture.'

Location is also important when trying to maintain spontaneity in street shots, especially when trying to compose a shot successfully at the same time. Kevin is also a firm believer that we're observers rather than just camera operators, so likes to spend time getting to know an area where he intends to shoot. 'I may spend most of my time throughout the day looking for a street corner where the characters are likely to turn up at a certain time of the day, and then it's a case of waiting,' he says. 'Setting up a stage for the characters and

the people to walk into is important. The light, background and composition comes together that way.'

Set yourself a challenge

For those new to street photography and seeking advice, Kevin's advice is simple – set yourself a challenge. 'Don't just go out with your camera and shoot all day because you'll just come back with a load of snapshots, so instead set yourself a challenge,' he says. This may be something as simple as the colour red for instance, or it could be human interaction, or motion; but as Kevin says, 'If you give yourself an objective, you'll shoot less but get more keepers; otherwise you'll go out all day and are unlikely to return with anything worthwhile.'

When it comes to lens choice, Kevin's preferred lens for street photography is the FUJINON XF35mm f/1.4 R, and it's easy to see why. It's a lightweight lens, quick to focus and with a good depth of field,' explains Kevin, adding that the equivalent 50mm coverage in full-frame terms 'is very relevant to the field-of-view that we

For further information, and special offers and competitions visit www.amateurphotographer.co.uk



Challenge yourself when shooting, setting yourself objectives such as to shoot something red



You can transfer techniques to other subjects

see with naturally. It's a great lens to just go out on the street with.'

As to the choice of whether to shoot with the intention of outputting in colour or black and white, Kevin feels this is a very subjective discussion; but while it depends on the location and subject, for him colour is his medium of choice for street photography. 'My commercial wedding photography is more emotion driven, so tends to be more mono, but when it actually comes to shooting on the street, I prefer colour.'

otographer.co.uk/fujifilm-x



Shooting from the hip can deliver great results



Matt Hart

Matt is a black and white street and event photographer based in Liverpool and is an official FUJIFILM X-Photographer. Passionate about street photography, he has developed the skill to observe and be virtually invisible, letting the world carry on around him without affecting the scene. www.fujiholics.com & www.matthewhartphotography.com

WITH a passion for street photography, Matt likes to keep the system and process as simple as possible so as not to overcomplicate the task, while constantly challenging his own ideas and concepts.

Knowing where to shoot is incredibly important for successful street shots, and Matt likes to find somewhere busy with plenty of interesting people moving around. If you're stuck for inspiration though, Matt has three favourite spots in the UK for street photography. 'Liverpool', says Matt, 'just because I know it really, really well. Manchester is also fantastic, and London. You can't go wrong in London – there are so many people and so much vibrancy in London, it's great.'

One of the difficulties faced by those new to street photography is blending in, but this all comes down to the environment. Matt's advice is to 'try to walk round a new location first without a camera and try to see how people react to you, and whether they notice you or not'. Once you've done that and have your camera with you, Matt says you should 'get back out on the street and use a combination of shooting from the hip and the camera raised to your eye, but it all depends on the area you're going to be working in'.

Kit choice

Matt's tried quite a few lenses in the Fujifilm X-Series range, but the FUJINON XF27mm f/2.8 is his favourite on the street. Before that it was the FUJINON XF35mm f/1.4 R but as Matt reveals, 'I've found over the past three years the 27mm fits my needs perfectly.'

With the FUJINON XF27mm f/2.8, Matt likes to pair it with the FUJIFILM X-T10, and with the addition of an XF35mm and a few spare batteries, that's about the extent of his street photography kit. As Matt says, 'That does me; I like to travel as light as possible and to travel around and get between people, making sure I don't stand out with bags and everything.'

Finally, what's the essence of street photography? For Matt, that's to 'try to create something different and fantastic'. Elaborating further, Matt believes that: 'Everything's been done these days, that's probably why I'm in the middle of a project at the moment shooting windows – because everyone says windows have

been done to death, but by doing a project that focuses in on that area, then I hope to look inside myself and find something a lot more interesting.'

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Empty-handed

Eric Pickersgill's images turned into an internet sensation when they created a debate about our use of mobile devices. He talks to **Karen Sheard**

Eric Pickersgill's large-format black & white images show people in North Carolina, USA, concentrating on their mobile devices rather than the people around them. However, these are 'staged' reconstructions of everyday situations the photographer has already witnessed.

Eric refers to them as 'reenactments' – performances of scenes he has encountered while driving around. He said: 'The majority of the photographs occurred originally as observations.

Then I intervened, explained myself and recreated the initial observation.'

How it started

The idea for the project came about when Eric, who was missing his new wife while away on an artist's retreat, noticed a family in a café all sitting together, but isolated from each other by their device usage. He made the following notes: 'Family sitting next to me at Illium cafe in Troy, New York, is so disconnected from one another. Not much talking. Father and two daughters have their own phones out. Mom doesn't have

Self-portrait of Eric and his wife, isolated but still touching

one or chooses to leave it put away. She stares out the window, and alone in the company of her family.'

He tells us about that moment: 'I was at this low point of feeling homesick and isolated, so that made it like this repelling moment where I thought, "Wow! These people are really not taking advantage of their time together."

For Eric, it was one of those perfect moments you later regret not photographing, and the scene stayed in his mind, leading to his idea for a photography project based on the question of how using personal devices can affect our relationships.

'The motivation wasn't to create a body of work to shame or bash people who use technology,' says Eric. 'It was more to create



When we're on our mobiles, we miss out on face-to-face interaction, says Eric

'I'm not slamming technology... it's more to bring attention to something'



This shot was taken at Blue Ridge Parkway, North Carolina

Da piece that operates like a mirror so people can see what they're doing and bring attention to something that's become normal quite quickly.

If a sub-culture of people were the only ones who had access to those devices and were using them as often, I think the rest of the world would be quite suspicious or concerned. However, it's something we're all partaking in, so I think we're less cynical as a whole.'

Eric is keen not to be seen as pointing the finger, but more as an active participant in the culture he is describing. 'I want to make sure I'm not coming across like I'm slamming technology,' he says. 'I think that would close down the conversation.'

The project has also made Eric more aware of his own device usage. He and his wife now have a policy of leaving the phone in the car when they go out for dinner. 'We've noticed that we have better and more sustained interaction with each other when the device isn't there,' he says. 'But it's weird, because you still reach for your pocket to see if it's there and that's when I start to think about the word "addiction".'

The issue is complex. He adds: 'I think there are huge benefits [to technology], because sometimes

being near people is just not possible. But when you can be, and you're still accessing other people who aren't there, I think that becomes problematic – at least for me personally.'

'For me, talking on the phone is not the same as sitting across the table from my wife – looking into her eyes and having face-to-face interaction.'

Eric also tried to use the shoots to make his subjects aware of their own usage. He asked them afterwards about their relationships with their devices. Many had strategies such as leaving their phones charging downstairs overnight or banning them from the dinner table, but he also found a unanimous admission of device dependence.

'It's certainly accelerating in acceptability, but there's this guilt I think that people have right now because the changes are happening within our lifetime,' he adds.

'We haven't had anyone born with their mother having a device in her hand – you know, taking a selfie – and then living a full life expectancy and then dying with a device in their hand. That hasn't happened yet, but it will, maybe just after my lifetime. I think we're still experiencing this shift.'

First shots

For his first pictures, Eric experimented with images of his wife in a café, taking a shot of her with a device in her hand, and then without, and then using Photoshop to paste the empty hand over the other shot.

'What I realised is that, first, I suck at Photoshop,' he says. 'The other thing was that there was no difference in facial expressions. So I was like, "Why am I making this harder on myself? I'm going to have people perform: I'm not going to Photoshop it out."

I love that this implicated the person in the picture. They knew what the photograph was about – it wasn't just me going around and taking pictures in the world and then Photoshopping them out without people's permissions.'

Some have argued that using Photoshop would have given a truer representation of the moment Eric was recreating, but Eric says it was not his intention to be journalistic. He feels photography is too often trusted as a true representation of reality – which is dangerous.

'I think I have my own troubled, relationship with photography,' he says. 'I've studied it for many years and am cynical of the medium, or at least I'm cynical of people's lack of cynicism towards photography.'

He continues, 'Although I respect what journalists do, the news industry depends on the belief of photography as being able to objectively represent truths, and as someone who has spent the past 12 years being an image maker, I feel there's no truth in photographs.'



They have four walls at the left, right, top and bottom, so it is cropping a moment and compressing it into a two-dimensional space. And then there's a world of possibilities with editing.'

Reaction

When Eric eventually uploaded his images to his website, he had no idea of the impact they would have. The series had been online for months, but it was only after a friend, Andrew Stern, interviewed him for the website [techinsider.io](#) that they really took off. A few days after the story came out, the images were all over the internet – without Eric's permission. It is with a touch of irony, and perhaps paradoxical, that a piece of work that questions our use of technology should become so successful online.

These newlyweds originally met on an online dating site. Eric shows us dual sides to this kind of technology

Eric's very first image for the series, shot outside a Snoopy's restaurant, North Carolina

Eric's first photos have been 'liked', 'shared' and 'viewed' on thousands of devices. He recalls his initial reactions: 'I remember on one of the first days I Googled my name and saw that someone had totally ripped off the pictures from my website... I was like, "This is terrible! Andrew, does this happen?" and he said, "Yes. If you want to go after them you can send a cease-and-desist, but you're going to waste a lot of time."

Instead, Eric decided to concentrate on the debate that the exposure had attracted. His images have been picked up by numerous publications and sites around the world, sparking many discussions over whether or not our devices are causing greater isolation in society.

Eric feels the popularity of his images lies in the fact that we are going through an unprecedented period of change, which is happening universally. 'There isn't a culture right now that isn't interested in talking about this subject, and I also did it in a way where I'm not accusing people,' adds Eric. 'Also, I think the performance part is referential to debates about photography and journalism and realism – what's true and what's not. It caters to so many people that I guess it had to take off, although I had no thought of that whatsoever.'

Eric's images have proved divisive, attracting a mass of positive media coverage and debate, but also some negativity. 'There are people saying the project has a neo-Luddite slant, but these are generally people who haven't read my statement and haven't seen I'm not trying to bash it,' says Eric. 'I just want to illustrate this very specific moment in history and do it in a way that communicates an idea.'



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Positive Lives, taken
in Kibeleze, Rwanda.
Venant Shyirambezre
at his home. It is
believed he caught
the HIV virus from
his late wife



Observe and report

Reportage photographer **Stuart Freedman** takes a look at the current state of the genre, as well as his own work. He talks to **Oliver Atwell**

Documentary and reportage are perhaps the most powerful tools we possess. The camera can be even deadlier than a gun in terms of causing shifts in the public consciousness. Take Vietnam, where the imagery that was transmitted back to the American public caused widespread condemnation; or the Gulf War, an event that was fought largely on our television screens and beamed into the homes of millions. Good imagery can, to use the BBC's motto, 'inform, educate and entertain'. Maybe the most impressive feat of documentary work is its

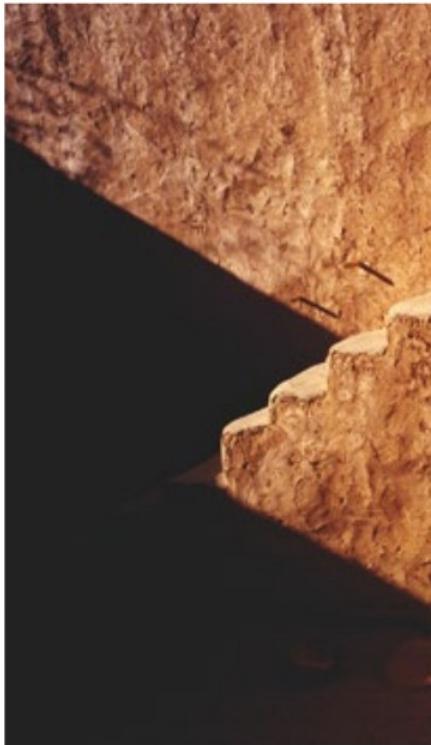
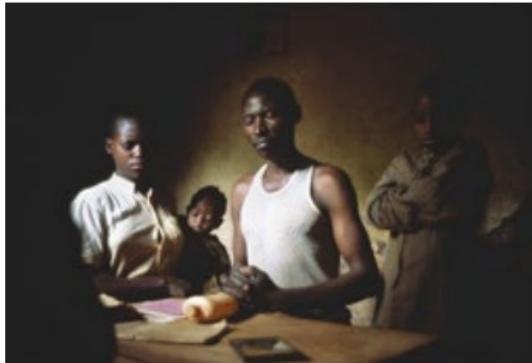
ability to create an emotional connection between people who do not necessarily know one another, or the context within which the pictures were taken. People separated by gulfs of land and sea can connect through the magic of photography and, to some degree, develop a level of empathy with one another. To put it in the words of reportage photographer Stuart Freedman, the aim of reportage should be to 'show the world to the world'.

London-born Stuart has been shooting since 1991 and in that time has seen his work hit the pages of a variety of publications such as *Life*, *Newsweek*, *The*

Sunday Times Magazine and *Time*. That's not to mention the numerous awards he has picked up along the way, as well as the fact he now sits under the wing of photo agency Panos Pictures. He is also currently heading up an online course at MyPhotoSchool, where he schools recruits in the traditions of documentary and reportage photography.

Perhaps the one thing that Stuart can't teach is how to find an attractive story, not because it's something he doesn't know, but simply because it's an intensely personal thing. Every photographer has his or her own interests, and, as it turns out, it's something that tends to alter over the years.

'What attracts me to a story is quite a hard question to answer and I think it's changed during my career,' says Stuart. 'I suppose it's true to say that I was, for many years, an assignment photographer, although I always worked on things that interested me. Generally, I'm interested in stories that are about people and how they live. For the first decade or so of my career, I think I was pursuing a much more overtly political agenda and working on themes that were perhaps more news-oriented – violence, famine and poverty. I'm still certainly very interested in those things, but I think I now try to find, if not a positive angle then at



ALL PICTURES © STUART STUART

least one that affirms life in a very definite way.'

In that vein, since the early 2000s, Stuart has exclusively shot in colour, and has increasingly wanted to make work that is both beautiful and simple. The point about telling a story, he says, is that you want people to engage with it and in doing so hopefully engender some kind of change.

'If you're simply showing misery all the time, you dampen the effect,' Stuart points out. 'The news agenda concentrates on grief and there is a clichéd view that photojournalism should only be about that – but the world is full of beauty and I hope to make work that reflects that.'

Style and content

Asking a photographer to pick their favourite work is like asking a parent to pick their favourite child. While they will say they couldn't possibly make such a decision, a little prodding reveals it is certainly something they've thought about.

'The work from the series *The*

Lord of the Flies [work about young men and violence in Africa during the civil wars of the late 1990s] is certainly important to me, as I think it was the first body of work that I made over several years,' says Stuart. 'I'm proud of the work [*Positive Lives*] that I made in Rwanda a decade ago about people living positively with HIV/AIDS, and I think that the story I made in Sierra Leone [*The Mutilated*] about the atrocities committed there stands out. Of course, I'm particularly fond of the work on the Indian Coffee Houses that is my new book, *The Palaces of Memory - Tales from the Indian Coffee House*. That has been a labour of love over the last few years and is both a love letter to a disappearing culture and an *aide-mémoire* to India itself.'

It is also part autobiographical in that it deals thematically with my own youth and how India taught me about 'the other'. In that sense, the coffee houses (and their customers and staff) were

Top left: Narcisse, who is HIV positive and the president of his local AIDS Association, prays with his family at home before they start work in the fields in Rwanda

Above left: A neighbour holds a stick to guide Anao, a blind farmer. Despite his handicap, Anao has no choice but to continue farming

Above: A boy ties his 'howl' or traditional turban against the wind, in Chinguetti, Mauritania, once one of Islam's holiest cities

translational devices allowing me, as a young journalist almost 20 years ago, to make some kind of an entrée into a different culture and in doing so, understand that the people I photographed and wrote about there were exactly the same people as back home.'

Stuart's work is infected with a distinct visual style. In each frame he utilises shadow, light and form, particularly as these things apply to the human subject.

'I'm certainly not conscious of trying to achieve a particular look,' says Stuart. 'I just try to make simple images that are as beautiful as I can make them. I hope that my pictures reflect some kind of dignity of the people who I'm working with. That said, I'm very conscious of the light that I work in and how it touches the subject. I'm often working in marginal situations and I believe that there's no such thing "bad" light – just how well we shoot in it.'

A big part of Stuart's work is his attempt to simplify everything, right down to the fact that he is



'The news concentrates on grief – but the world is full of beauty and I hope to make work that reflects that'

Photography now

Stuart suggests that he perhaps works in a very traditional way, specifically within a humanist documentary tradition. What's especially interesting is that Stuart sees this as flying in the face of contemporary reportage.

'It's just not a very fashionable approach,' he says. 'The work that I make is conditioned as much by the structures of that tradition as the aims I had when I started photography – to document the world in order to try and to make it a better place. That probably sounds extraordinarily naive, and I've no evidence to suggest that I've succeeded in any meaningful way, but I still believe that it's an ambition worth pursuing.'

When Stuart looks at the ways in which reportage has shifted, there are several key things that stand out, not least of which is the bleed through from the aesthetic sensibilities of the art world – photographs of empty spaces, constructed images and people talking about 'their practice'.

increasingly shooting the majority of his work on a fixed 50mm prime lens attached to one of his three Canon EOS 5D Mark III bodies. In addition, he works almost exclusively in manual mode and always has a lightmeter on his person. It is, he says, a hangover from the days of shooting on transparency film.

'I often use a set of colour cards, too, when I have time, so what little post-production I do is both accurate and speedy,' he explains. 'In terms of composition, I'm always trying to get depth and different layers into an image. I like photographs that tell you something but also ask questions. That said, I'm after a picture that doesn't scream "technique" and is as faithful to the subject as it can be. I really try and hammer this home with students, either on the course at MyPhotoSchool or my mentoring work. The point is to make engaging work, but work that says everything about the subject, not about you or how you shot it.'

Vishal Bhatt breathes fire above Shadipur. The Bhatts, a huge extended family of puppeteers, singers and dancers, are all from Rajasthan, India



'I'm also sceptical of the trend in making everything portrait based – reducing others to ciphers to be gazed at'

A large black silhouette of a person's head and shoulders against a bright blue sky. The silhouette is facing right, showing profile. In the background, there are some bare branches of a tree and a small dark figure in the distance.

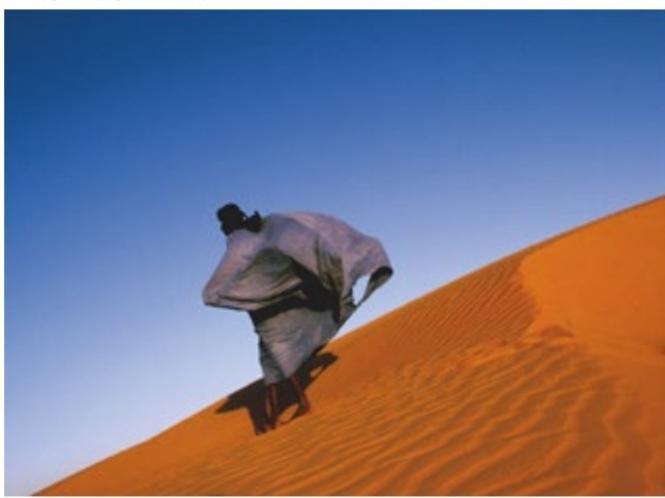
I think that that kind of work is essentially about the photographer and I'm very suspicious of it,' he says. 'I'm all for pushing the boundaries of reportage, and making the genre accessible and forward-looking, but many of these ideas are, in some sense, regressive; they are about looking inwards, a sort of narcissism and, for me, not about documenting the world in a way that engages positively with it. I'm also sceptical of the trend in making everything portrait based – reducing others to ciphers to be gazed at under the lens of a butterfly collector. The work that excites me is about vibrancy, emotion and engagement, not the cold, hard, objective stare of the descendants of the Düsseldorf School.

'In terms of the business of photography, everything's changed,' he continues. 'One of the most significant changes is the sheer number of people operating within it. That's fine in one sense, but in terms of economics it's harder to make a living because it's a question of supply and demand. One of the worrying corollaries of that is I see young photographers leaving the

business because they can't survive financially. If the only people that are able to continue as journalists and photographers are the wealthy, that is very dangerous for the profession and for the kind of truths that we seek to tell.'

There's an interesting quote from Stephen Mayes, former New York head of VII Photo Agency and secretary of the World Press Photo Competition (he is now executive director of the Tim Hetherington Trust), where he says, 'What I tend to find is that so much journalism is about affirming what we already know, instead of challenging us to broaden our horizons.'

It's a sentiment Stuart, to an extent, agrees with. He says: 'Stephen was talking, among other things, about photojournalistic clichés – tropes of poverty, misery and exoticism that dominate photojournalism. I agree that young photographers often think,





Above: Boys climb what is known locally as the Tree of Adam at Al-Qurnah near Basra, Iraq. The holy tree, according to the legend, marked the Garden of Eden, at the convergence of the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers

Left: A man walks over a dune overlooking Chinguetti, Mauritania. His robe or 'boubou' flaps in the wind

Right: A stylishly dressed man walking through the Piazza district in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

mistakenly, that their work must solely be about these themes: as if blindly recording suffering means that your work is more authentic. I'm glad to see work increasingly being made about local issues, but I still think there's a place for a journalist to go and see the world using his curiosity, a camera and a pen. I just think that we have to consider exactly how we report things.

I think that inevitably the news wires do a good deal of the heavy pulling with telling immediacies now – the trick is to work on stories that have longer and more ambitious scopes. I know of few areas of journalism changing more constantly than photojournalism. The point is to produce work that is about "challenging us to broaden our horizons" and about making work that is accessible and timeless – otherwise we are just making intellectual images for a clique of other photographers.

AP

Citizen journalism and changing technologies

'IN ONE sense, I'm ambivalent about citizen journalism,' says Stuart. 'Everyone has a camera phone, every one can be a photographer. However, just because the man on the Clapham omnibus is first with the picture doesn't mean that his picture is necessarily the best, nor is it to be trusted. There is an ethical dimension here. The point seems to me to be that professional photographers have to set themselves apart from amateur citizen journalists. The veracity of what we as professionals produce should be the defining factor. Our images should be the trusted ones – analogous to a journalist's direct quotes.'

'I'm all for embracing the future and utilising whatever medium makes the best image at the time. I've shot work on everything from 5x4in to 6x6cm to panoramic. The first cover of *Time* shot on a smartphone was in 2012 (left), so we are a long way down this road. Ultimately, however, the point is to make interesting and incisive

images and we do that with our eyes. The medium we transmit that through is less important, I think. I also believe that the future is increasingly fluid, in that photography will increasingly cross media genres. So, for example, a fair amount of what I do now is writing, but others make moving images – I think we'll see a confluence of all these elements in the future. The days of the photographer simply making images in isolation are disappearing.'



Stuart is a multiple award-winning photographer. His work has been published in, among others, *Life*, *Geo*, *Time*, *Der Spiegel*, *Newsweek* and *Paris Match*, covering stories from Albania to Afghanistan. He currently heads the documentary, reporting and photojournalism course at www.my-photo-school.com. To view more of Stuart's work, visit www.stuartfreedman.com



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The image shows the exterior of a blue-painted shopfront with large windows. The number '40' is visible above the doors. A sign above the shop reads 'Grays of Westminster' and 'Exclusively... Nikon'. Below the sign, the text 'THE LEGEND AND THE LEGACY' is displayed. The shop has flower boxes on either side of the entrance.

by Gillian Greenwood

Release date
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*A Shop Selling Nikon?
It'll Never Work!*

Thirty Years in the Making...

GRAYS OF WESTMINSTER THE LEGEND AND THE LEGACY

by Gillian Greenwood

Grays of Westminster is not simply a famous Nikon camera shop; for many photographers around the world it is an institution and its name has become a byword for excellence. It has won numerous awards and distinctions and is the first camera shop in the world to be granted its own Coat of Arms by Her Majesty's College of Arms.

The Legend of the Legacy is a celebration of the last 30 years of the history of Grays of Westminster and tells the extraordinary story of its development from a tiny mail order business with modest beginnings to its present incarnation as a unique company that looks after more than 49,000 customers worldwide.

Gillian Greenwood superbly illustrated account offers a fascinating view of the singular Nikon-only camera shop and her anecdotal style provides an in-depth understanding of just what makes Grays of Westminster tick. She vividly describes the building, the man who founded the company, the people who run the shop and some of its famous visitors.

The Forward is by the President of the Nikon Corporation of Japan.

208 pages, 183 colour & black & white photographs and illustrations, 274 x 194mm, hardcover £30.00



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WILDLIFE WATCH

Western capercaillie

With only a small population of capercaillie in Scotland, Andrew Mason reckons this shy bird is well worth the effort

CAPERCAILLIE are usually sedentary and shy, avoiding contact with people. They spend a great deal of time foraging for food on the floor or in trees where they also roost. Occasionally, so-called 'rogue' males will actively and aggressively seek out any person who enters their territory.

Habitat

Capercaillie are adapted to a habitat dominated by old coniferous forests with a dense covering of ground vegetation that is predominantly heather and blueberry. Ideally, the woodland will have a canopy that allows light to penetrate through the trees. Ground vegetation provides nutrition as well as cover from predators and adverse weather.

History

Capercaillie were once found throughout the native pinewoods of Scotland, Northern England, Ireland and Europe, but as a result of deforestation, climate change and hunting they became extinct in England during the 17th century and in Scotland in 1785. They were successfully reintroduced into Scotland from 1837 and in the early 1970s there was an estimated population of 20,000. However, current numbers are approximately 2,200. Capercaillie now face extinction in Scotland for the second time and numbers have also fallen across their surviving ranges in northern and central Europe.

Breeding and lekking

The capercaillie breeding season starts at the beginning of March and lasts until June. The majority of this time is taken

up with male birds lekking (engaged in territorial displays at leks) from the beginning of March until the middle of May. If there is more than one male bird present at a lek, confrontation between the males will determine the dominant or alpha male. The alpha male will mate with the females when they arrive at the lek from mid-April until mid-May. Capercaillie hens are then on ground nests from mid-April to mid-June. The young chicks are particularly vulnerable as they are unable to maintain a stable body temperature without the hens during their first few weeks.

Capercaillie and the law

Capercaillie are protected under law. It is an offence to disturb any capercaillie while it is lekking. It is also an offence to disturb any capercaillie nest or brood. Given their endangered status and their sensitivity to disturbance, capercaillie should not be photographed in Scotland during the breeding season (unless a licence has first been obtained). To do so may be an offence.

Best time to shoot

The best times to photograph capercaillie are in January and February when the males are at their best, before the breeding season starts. With changeable weather conditions in January and February in Scotland, these months offer great opportunities to create a wide range of images. As mentioned, these birds should not be photographed during their breeding season unless you have a licence to do so.

KIT LIST

Clothing ▶

Shooting in remote locations with unpredictable winter conditions is challenging. Use waterproof clothing that can be layered and ventilated.



▼ Fast telephoto

A fast telephoto lens (f/2.8-f/5.6) will allow you to photograph at lower light levels. Use a telephoto zoom with a long range of focal lengths.



Andrew Mason

Andrew is a full-time professional nature photographer, based in rural Staffordshire. His work has been widely published in books, magazines and on calendars, and used by corporate and government clients.
www.andrewmasonphotography.co.uk



Do not be afraid to photograph the birds at high ISO settings if the light is low

ALL PHOTOS © ANDREW MASON

While lekking, the male birds show off their fan tails and puff out their feathers



A male displays in the Caledonian Forest, Cairngorms National Park





Shooting advice

Rogue males

There have been several well-known rogue male capercaillie in Scotland over the past few years, which have attracted a lot of attention from photographers and bird watchers. I have been fortunate to photograph two of these birds in different locations and conditions. Both males actively and aggressively approached any person who entered their territory and displayed to them as if they were a rival male.

When a rogue male approached me, I backed off and let him display and assert his dominance over me. He then accepted my presence in his territory and I was able to photograph him without causing any disturbance. Having been accepted into his territory, I watched with amusement as the bird sought out any new intruder, even sneaking up behind an unsuspecting mountain biker who had stopped to watch and biting him on an exposed leg.

Low light levels

Shooting in coniferous woodland in winter can present challenges due to low light levels. As you have to photograph capercaillie where you find them and where they want to go, do not be afraid of photographing at high ISO settings if the light is low. Modern DSLRs have fantastic high ISO performance. It is always better to get a noisy image than a blurred one, and any undesirable noise can be dealt with in post-processing.

Snow

Male capercaillie are very dark, and if you are fortunate to have snow on the ground exposure can be tricky, especially in bright conditions. By using your DSLR's histogram you can check for clipping of the blacks and whites, and adjust the exposure accordingly. Using manual exposure, you can lock the exposure at the desired setting.

Capercaillie are found in Scottish pine woods

About the capercaillie

The capercaillie is one of Scotland's most iconic species. The largest member of the grouse family, its native habitat is the pinewoods that once covered much of Scotland.

- Location** The surviving capercaillie population can now only be found in a few small areas of native pinewoods and commercial conifer plantations in Scotland. One particular stronghold is Speyside.

- Size** Adult males are 75-95cm and weigh 4-5kg. Adult females are 55-65cm and weigh 2kg.

- Diet** Berries, shoots and stems. After hatching, young capercaillie eat insects associated with bilberry plants.

- Sounds** The sound of a male capercaillie is unmistakable – a series of clicks, gurgles and bellows that sounds like water running through old metal pipes.

- Population** Approximately 2,200 in Scotland.

Evening Class

Photoshop guru Martin Evening sorts out your photo-editing and post-processing problems

How to apply an Upright adjustment

THE LOW angle of view in this photograph by Adrian Holt has produced a nice composition. The strong daylight and clear-sky background bring out more of the cranes' definition. The photo required some additional post-edit capture sharpening work. I noticed some fall-off in

sharpness to the edges of the frame, which is something to be expected with a regular zoom kit lens. The edge detail was improved with the Enable Profile Corrections and Remove Chromatic Aberration options enabled in the Lens Corrections panel.

Submit your images

Please see the 'Send us your pictures' section on page 3 for details or visit www.amateurphotographer.co.uk

AFTER



BEFORE



1 Basic panel adjustments

This photograph did not need too much in the way of tone and colour corrections. I set the white balance to a Daylight preset setting, while the exposure was pretty much spot-on. I just boosted the overall contrast slightly, lightened the Shadows and added a midtone contrast Clarity adjustment.



2 Capture sharpening

There was a lot of fine detail in the cranes, which I needed to make sure was kept as sharp as possible. I therefore went to the Detail panel and applied a 0.9 Radius sharpening using an Amount setting of 45 and the Detail slider set to the maximum +100 setting.



3 Upright adjustment

To make the cranes appear to tower over the ship even more, I went to the Lens Corrections panel and selected the Vertical Upright adjustment. This applied a strong perspective correction to the image, which, as a result, needed to be cropped to remove the transparent corners.

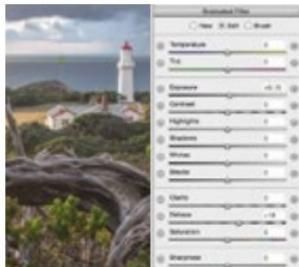
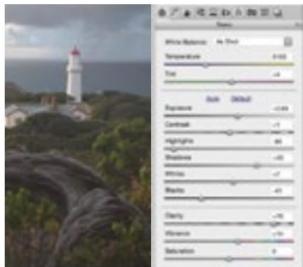
BEFORE**AFTER**

Using a localised adjustment

THE CAMERA metadata indicates that this photograph by Ewan Arnolda was shot at f/16 using an exposure of 1/10sec and was therefore most likely shot with the camera mounted on a tripod. In such controlled circumstances you have the option to set all the controls manually. Everything about this particular photo looks great, except I noticed the focusing on the

foreground wasn't quite as sharp as it should have been. This doesn't always matter, but because the log plays such a dominant part in the composition, it needed to appear as sharp as the lighthouse. This could have been

achieved by carefully focusing on a point midway between the two and allowing the small lens aperture to pull everything into sharp focus. The following steps show how I was able to sharpen the log using a localised adjustment.



1 Optimise tone and colour

The first step was to open the image in Camera Raw and use Basic panel adjustments to add more drama to the photograph. I tightened the Exposure slightly and set the Highlights slider to -85 to preserve highlight detail. I set the Shadows slider to +43 and added a lot of Clarity combined with a +14 Vibrance boost.

2 Graduated Filter

I then selected the Graduated Filter tool and added a filter adjustment to the top section of the photo. I applied +19 Dehaze adjustment to remove some of the haze in the distance. I also needed to add a little Exposure to prevent the clouds from appearing too dark, which can occur when you add a Dehaze adjustment.

3 Add sharpness

The original photograph was shot at f/16 using a standard focal-length lens. However, the small lens aperture was not quite enough to pull the foreground into sharp focus, so I added an Adjustment brush adjustment to add extra sharpening and a Clarity boost to the log in the foreground. These sliders were both set to +100 — the maximum settings.



Capture image sharpening

IF YOU shoot in JPEG mode, capture sharpening happens automatically in-camera. If you shoot in raw mode you'll have full control over the capture-sharpening process. In the Camera Raw Detail panel you have the Amount, Radius, Detail and Masking sliders. The Amount slider controls the amount, while the Radius can be adjusted according to the

type of detail in the image. It helped to apply a Radius lower than 1.0 to emphasise the fine detail in the cranes (opposite page). Also, this photo had been shot using a low ISO setting, so I set the Detail slider to its maximum +100 setting. Finally, the Masking slider can be used to apply a sharpening mask, letting you apply sharpening selectively in an image.

Martin Evening is a noted expert in both photography and digital imaging. He is well known in London for his fashion and beauty work, for which he has won several awards. Martin has worked with the Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Lightroom engineering teams over many years and is one of the founding members of a software design company. Visit www.martinevening.com

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Andy Westlake

reviews a camera bag by tripod maker Manfrotto

MANFROTTO is best known for its tripods, but recently it has taken to producing bags in all shapes and sizes. Its latest design aims to solve a common conundrum: how do you carry a tripod as well as your camera kit and other bits and bobs?

The Advanced Befree Messenger has a unique answer, in the shape of a foldaway compartment that unzips from the front of the bag. It can accommodate tripods with a folded length of up to 12in, held in place by draw-cord enclosures at each end.

On the back is a separate laptop compartment for screen sizes up to 15in, while on the inside is a similar-sized pocket for A4 documents or magazines. Numerous other pockets are dotted around the bag, including a large organiser compartment at the front.

Padded dividers partition the inside of the bag, but can only be attached to one side, as mesh pockets cover the other side. The dividers can be arranged to hold a DSLR with a couple of lenses, and perhaps a flash, in a space that's 9in tall but only about 6in wide. Another padded circular divider can hold an additional lens or a water bottle, and a zipped opening in the lid gives easy access.

Verdict

The Advanced Befree Messenger is cleverly designed and capacious, although the space designed for holding a camera is limited. With no padding between your back and the laptop, it can also be uncomfortable to carry when fully loaded. The quality of finish isn't quite what I'd expect for the price, either. However, the tripod holder is neat, and there's plenty of space for your personal items.

Andy Westlake

Amateur
Photographer
Testbench
Recommended



Securing buckles

Oddly placed clips on either side of the bag secure the lid closed.

At a glance

- Messenger bag for camera gear, 15in laptop and personal items
- Front holder for travel tripod
- Top zip for easy access to kit
- Rain cover

ALSO CONSIDER

Vanguard Veo 37

£89.99, www.vanguardworld.co.uk
This neat shoulder bag includes a compartment in the base to hold a travel tripod, with space for camera kit above.



Manfrotto Unica V

£74.95, www.manfrotto.co.uk
Like the Vanguard Veo 37, this has an internal compartment for a tripod. It can also take a 15in laptop.



Manfrotto Advanced Travel Backpack

£109.95, www.manfrotto.co.uk
This backpack will take camera kit and a 13in laptop. It also has an external zip-out tripod pocket.



Joby Action Bike Mount and Light Pack

£46 • www.joby.com

IF YOU'RE an avid cyclist and own an action camera, you're probably used to mounting it on your bike to capture some interesting point-of-view video footage. Basic bike mounts such as GoPro's Handlebar/Seatpost/Pole Camera Mount (£19.99) are fine if all you want to do is attach an action camera and nothing else, but if you'd like a broader range of mounting configurations you'll want to look at a more sophisticated alternative, such as Joby's new Action Bike Mount.

Designed with multiple attachment points, the handlebar mount allows you to set up your action camera in a number of ways, with the option to attach other accessories via its 1/4-20 mounts. For example, it's possible to attach a GoPro securely to the front mount and keep the top mount free to attach a Garmin computer or smartphone for navigation purposes.

To make yourself known to other road users, front white, and rear red, visibility lights are also supplied. Both feature a 1/4-20 thread for quick attachment to the handlebar mount. For times when you have an action camera and computer/mobile phone attached, but also want to use the lights, there's the option to revert to using the rubberised handlebar straps that are also provided. The single LED lights are better than having none at all, but they're not particularly bright and are no match for multiple LED bike lights specially designed for night use.

The mount itself is robustly made and certainly justifies spending the extra money if you're keen on the idea of mounting multiple devices securely to your bike.

Michael Topham

The Joby Bike Mount is supplied with everything you need to attach an action camera to the handlebars



Amateur
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★★★★★



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Nick Dungan

As a child, Nick went to British Touring Car races with his father. This boyhood fascination kickstarted an award-winning career as a professional photographer. He now travels the world, capturing some of the most exciting moments in motor racing. Instagram @nickdunganphoto

Driving force

Professional motorsport photographer **Nick Dungan** tests the **Sony Alpha 7R II** at the 6 Hours of Bahrain World Endurance Championship race

My fascination with motorsport predates my love of photography. In fact, it was my desire to get closer to car racing that inspired me to buy my first DSLR.

I loved cars and motor racing when I was growing up. My dad used to take me to British Touring Car races, and it was great

watching from the pit garages and grandstands, but as I grew older I wanted to get closer. I saw the media photographers and it looked like the closest you could get to the action without driving a car. So, as soon as I could, I bought a Canon EOS 400D.

Not long after, I was at Thruxton Circuit in Hampshire watching the British Touring Car Championship

and read about a competition in *Amateur Photographer* that one of the teams was running. As luck would have it, my favourite image of the weekend was of that team's car, so I entered the competition and several months later got a call to say I had won.

Since then, I've worked to build contacts with drivers, race teams, newspapers and in turn secure



At a glance

- 42.4MP, full-frame Exmor R CMOS sensor
- 0.5in, 2.4-million-dot OLED EVF
- ISO 100-25,600 (50-102,400 expanded)
- 5fps continuous shooting
- 4K video (100Mbps)
- E2,599 body only



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW MCKEE

Here the Alpha 7R II nailed focus using the Canon EF 50mm f/1.4 lens

the single best investment in equipment I have made. Somehow, it continues to withstand all the abuse I throw at it. Unfortunately, despite still being capable of producing great images, it has fallen behind in the ISO and megapixel race.

In search of a new camera body, the obvious choices for a motorsport photographer shooting with a Canon are the EOS-1D X or the EOS 5D Mark III. Both are great cameras, but both are due for a replacement in the near future (probably in time for the Olympics in the summer). Therefore, buying either at the moment would see me watching my new camera body lose money overnight once the new model is launched.

I was prepared to hold out until Canon launched the successors to the EOS-1D X and EOS 5D Mark III, when both Canon and Sony launched super-high-megapixel bodies – the EOS 5DS and Alpha 7R II respectively. While megapixels are not a huge concern for motorsport photography, I fill my weeks with non-motorsport clients, and that includes shooting commercial images for heavy plant manufacturers and interior photography for a furniture company. Here, the additional resolution and ability to crop a landscape image to portrait can be invaluable. On top of this, early indicators were that the Alpha 7R II produced very little noise at high ISO sensitivities and had an amazing dynamic range – both very useful features on a motorsport shoot.

The Alpha 7R II can use Canon lenses with full electronic control via the Metabones Smart Adapter. This striking action shot was taken with the EF 500mm f/4L IS USM

accreditation for various championships – from club racing to F1. Photography became a second job to my full-time career as a designer, and consumed all my spare time and holidays. In 2012, I was awarded the Motor Sports Association (MSA) Young Photographer of the Year. That convinced me I should make photography my full-time career.

I've been a full-time motorsport photographer for a year, and my cameras are no longer just things I use as a hobby – they're the tools of my trade. So ensuring they're well maintained is vital to staying at the top of my game.

Tools of the trade

My Canon EOS-1D Mark III has been with me for five years; it was my first professional camera and

Why the Alpha 7R II?

The Canon EOS 5DS would seem the logical choice for a Canon user. Unfortunately, the ISO performance is somewhat in the dark ages compared with most modern cameras. For my work, I don't see enough benefits from this model over the much cheaper EOS 5D Mark III.

The Sony, on the other hand, has some unique features over the Canon that grabbed my attention. First, the difference in size between this mirrorless camera system and a traditional mirrored DSLR is significant. The Sony is closer in size to a compact camera than a professional DSLR. When travelling with equipment, space is at a premium, and being able to fit two Alpha 7R II bodies into the space in which you would fit one Canon EOS-1D is very appealing.

The next feature I was drawn to was the electronic viewfinder (EVF). I recently tested the Fujifilm X-T1 and fell in love with its small form, stunning EVF and razor-sharp lens selection. After using an EVF, returning to a camera with a traditional mirror feels like a step backwards. Unfortunately, though, the Fuji system does not offer a long focal length, fast-aperture lens that fits my needs.

Enter the Alpha 7R II. Its EVF is just as good as Fujifilm's, but unlike the Fuji system you can use a 'smart' adapter to mount Canon EF lenses to it. This gets around the issue of running two camera systems.

Over the past year, I noticed an increasing number of automotive photographers switching to Sony's Alpha 7R II, while retaining their old Canon glass and using an adapter made by Metabones



Mark Webber, 2015 World Endurance Champion, taken with a Canon 50mm

(www.metabones.com) that allowed the Canon glass to behave exactly as it would on a Canon body. However, the requirements from a camera for automotive photography are quite different when compared with what you need for motorsport.

With this in mind, I started to look into the Metabones adapter. I discovered that its latest version (Mark IV) now supported the Alpha 7R II's new on-sensor, phase-detection autofocus. Early reports seemed to suggest this significantly improved AF performance when using adapters and third-party lenses. Although Metabones does warn that not all lenses perform as they would on Canon camera bodies, it still seemed like this system had the potential to be a great solution.

Getting ready

After a lot of pleading with Sony (the Alpha 7R II is in serious demand), I obtained a test camera just in time for the final race of the World Endurance Championship in Bahrain. Once I had it in my hands, I set about familiarising myself with it. Having become used to Fujifilm's X-T1 over recent months,

the small size of the Sony felt familiar. I found the Sony's slightly larger grip, and removal of the ISO and shutter dial in favour of a Canon 5D-type mode dial, easier to use. The Sony also has some of my favourite features found on the X-T1. The dedicated exposure-compensation dial and tilting screen are not really expected on professional-level cameras, but are invaluable once you become familiar with them.

'The small size of the Sony Alpha 7R II allowed me to sneak it into my carry-on bag with only the slightest of rearrangements'

Before getting too carried away with setting up the camera, I installed the latest firmware on both the camera and the Metabones adapter. The latest Mark IV version of the Metabones adapter includes a micro USB port that allows users to perform firmware updates themselves (previously, this process required returning the unit to the factory). This reflects the speed at which Metabones is introducing updates to its equipment.

Next was the focus system. One feature on any professional camera that I could not live without is back-button focus. This option removes the focus drive from the shutter button, reassigning it to a button on the back of the body. This allows you to focus the camera using a back button, then recompose your image and take the shot without the camera attempting to refocus.

Set-up days

The Bahrain round of the World Endurance Championship is a unique race: not only is it the final round of the event, but it is also the only dusk-to-night race. For many photographers, this is a real highlight of the year. The beautiful golden sunsets and vibrant floodlit night sessions make for great photos. The 28°C temperature is also a welcome break from the cold November temperatures back home.

As one of the official photographers for the World Endurance Championship, I arrive a few days before any cars take to the track. We document the event set-up, the drivers' preparation and any pre-event press activities.

These set-up days are one of my favourite parts of the race weekend, as they provide plenty of opportunities to shoot detail shots in the pitlane and get closer to the cars than would usually be possible during a race session itself.

My lens of choice for this is usually the Canon EF 50mm f/1.4. So I slot the Sony, Metabones adapter and Canon EF 50mm f/1.4 together and head to the



This portrait of Sam Bird was shot with the Canon EF 85mm f/1.8 USM

The Alpha 7R II had no trouble using the Canon EF 500mm f/4L IS USM with the Canon Extender EF 1.4x II teleconverter



pitlane. On this occasion, though, I hit a snag! The lens will not register. I ponder for a moment what can be wrong before reverting to every call centre's favourite solution – turn it off and back on again. That fixed it!

Changing lenses with the body switched on seems to produce unreliable results. Sometimes it is fine, but other times it will not focus or register at all. In an ideal world you should always remember to turn the body off first, but in the hustle and bustle of the moment I can see how this might get overlooked.

I start by setting the camera's flexible AF spot to medium setting. Using constant autofocus, it is snappy and grabs focus brilliantly, but perhaps lacks the pin-point precision that is useful when trying to focus on a small detail that becomes so important when shooting wide open at f/1.4. I switch down to the smallest selectable AF area, which is smaller than is possible on my EOS 5D Mark III. To my surprise, the autofocus remains accurate and fast.

I decide to push the autofocus further, swap to my 85mm f/1.8

lens and head inside one of the garages, shielding myself from the burning midday sun and stepping into the cool shade of the garage. I line up a shot using the EVF and two scroll wheels to adjust my exposure to the new lighting conditions, placing the tiny AF point at the badge on one of the Aston Martins. Again, the focus locks on perfectly.

At this point, it is time for the teams and drivers to do a track walk. This is when the drivers familiarise themselves with the circuit if they have not driven it

before, or to ensure that no changes have been made since their last visit. This involves walking a complete lap – nearly 3½ miles on this circuit. This is where the size of the Alpha 7R II comes into its own. Even when used with the EF 70–200mm f/2.8 lens, it still results in a significant weight and size reduction compared with an EOS 5D Mark III. The flip-up screen is also great for taking low-angle shots without having to lie on the ground.

This long walk does show up one weakness in the Alpha 7R II – its

battery life. On my 45-min walk, I filled an entire memory card, but I nearly emptied a battery too. While the battery life is poor on the Alpha 7R II, it does have one redeeming feature – it is possible to charge the camera on the fly using a portable powerbank via the micro USB socket.

On further investigation, I also discover that turning the screen's sleep timer to 10 seconds and turning off Sony's built-in stabilisation helps to eke out more battery life. I do not use image stabilisation most of the time, as it tends to slow the camera, and for most motorsport images it has little benefit.

With the track walk over, I head back into the media centre to edit and send the images that I've shot. The first thing that grabs my attention is the relatively low number of images you get on a card, with my 32GB SDHC card holding fewer than 300. Although I am using a fairly fast SanDisk Extreme Pro Class 10, 95MB/s SD card, the download times seem much longer than I would expect from a similar speed and capacity CF card. This does slow down workflow and could be a



The Bahrain race gives the opportunity to capture vibrant floodlit photos

problem when image turnaround speed is critical. Getting the files onto the computer, I am able to have a closer look at the images the 42MP sensor produces. As you would expect, the resolution is vast, only matched by the file size (uncompressed raw files are 86MB). On close inspection, even when used with older lower-resolution glass, the quality is astounding. The details on portraits in the eyes, skin texture and eyelashes is striking. But this quality can be very unforgiving – a slight front or back focus is immediately noticeable. However, if you nail the focus the rewards are worth it.

As I move the files into Lightroom and begin to pull the highlights and shadows around, I am amazed at just how much information is in these files, particularly in the highlights where there seems to be a lot of colour, which I was not expecting. The files also seem to have a nice warmth to their tones that I haven't seen on a modern camera since the Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III and EOS-1D Mark III. In the Bahrain sunshine, this gives the images a gorgeous golden tone even before processing.

One small niggle at this point is that Sony does not provide an option to change the file names, and this strikes me as a fairly basic oversight. With any luck it will be added in a future firmware update.

Track action

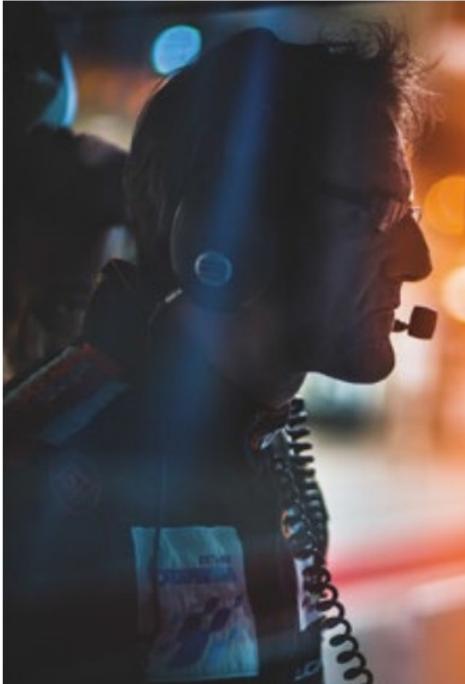
The next day it is time to try the camera on moving subjects. Most

of the shorter glass I use in the pitlane has worked as well as I could hope, but this is the real test.

I head out on track with my go-to lenses – the Canon EF 70–200mm f/2.8 (non IS) and my EF 500mm f/4 IS Mark I. Starting with the EF 70–200mm, I try some panning. It's not the most challenging for the camera, but good for testing the EVF blackout between frames. I was disappointed; to my eye, Fujifilm's EVF is much faster, with a shorter blackout. This made it difficult to pan in burst mode, which is my preferred technique.

Changing my approach to taking single frames, it was easy to nail pans down to 1/50sec, while the EVF gave me constant visual verification that my exposures were spot on. It was a shame not to be able to take advantage of the Alpha 7R II's 5fps frame rate. Although not very fast compared with some cameras, the 5fps is adequate for my uses – but only if the camera can deliver sharp focused images. So, this is a mark against the Sony.

Changing my position on the track, I pick a moderately fast head-on shot, for which I'd expect my Canon cameras to achieve more than 80% success. I fire a burst of four or five frames. Here I am shooting a higher shutter speed (1/160sec+) and the EVF blackout seems less noticeable. I review the images and find the first frame on each burst is perfectly focused, while the next three or four frames are much less reliable. Again, I adjust my technique to taking single



frames and I achieve a success rate comparable to my Canon.

At this point, I'm starting to get a feel for the camera's limitations, so I decide to try the EF 500mm lens, but I'm apprehensive about the

likely success of this combination. Before leaving, I had read a warning on the Metabones website that stated: 'Even on the Alpha 7R II, long telephoto lenses hunt more often and autofocus performance progressively deteriorates as focal length gets longer.'

Nevertheless, I attach the 500mm and pick a section of the circuit that provides a fairly easy head-on shot where the cars are doing around 80–100mph.

Again, I find that the first shot in a burst tends to be significantly more successful than the following frames. However, the number of usable images, even from those first shots, is still noticeably lower than I would expect from my Canon cameras. On inspection, the images also seemed to display a level of noise that I would not expect from this camera at low ISO sensitivities. I can only put this down to some kind of compatibility issue when using the 500mm with the Metabones adapter. Having said that, the focused images were perfectly usable – even if they didn't do the 42MP sensor justice.



A panning shot at 1/80sec, taken with the Canon EF 70–200mm f/2.8 USM



Shooting wide open with the Canon EF 85mm f/1.8 USM gave a gorgeously blurred background

During this process of shooting and reviewing images, I find myself becoming frustrated with the camera's processing and preview times. Clearly, the 86MB files take some processing power to view. But the time it takes to generate a 100% preview or switch between images could be 10 seconds, if the camera is saving to card.

Conclusion

I start to wonder if the Alpha 7R II has a place in my kit bag. It was never going to be a direct replacement for the EOS 5D Mark III or EOS-1D X, but it brings features to the table that these cameras do not have.

I love the Alpha 7R II's size and weight (599g with batteries). The resolution, dynamic range and quality of the raw files means you can easily use it for commercial work. The less imposing size seems to make people less intimidated by your camera, while some question whether it is a 'professional' model.

The autofocus is very good on short focal-length lenses and even on shorter telephotos. However, it simply isn't up to scratch on the

long telephoto lenses. Yet this is nothing for Sony to be ashamed of, as ultimately this is all working through a third-party adapter and, frankly, the fact that it works to a half-decent standard at all is impressive. However, this camera will be used daily, in all conditions, so I must also consider some of the strange behaviour the adapter caused when changing lenses. I also wonder how well the system would cope in poor weather conditions as the Metabones has no weather sealing.

Given all these concerns, though, I am left thinking about the Alpha 7R II's EVF. While it isn't perfect – the lag between frames makes it hard to work with when shooting bursts of images – it is brilliant. Being able to watch your exposure in tricky lighting conditions, and getting to see the image that will be delivered when you press the shutter, are such great benefits that I really became attached to this camera for portrait and detailed pitlane work. I would seriously consider adding the Sony Alpha 7R II to my camera bag.

AP

Focal points

The Alpha 7R II provides all the sophisticated controls a serious photographer could want

Image stabilisation

Built-in 5-axis image stabilisation works with every lens that can be used on the camera, and brings extra benefits for long exposures or close-up shooting.

Customisation

The Alpha 7R II allows you to set the camera's buttons and dials as you'd like them. To make a change, head to the custom key settings option, which is located in the main menu.

Durable shutter

The Alpha 7R II's shutter is tested to 500,000 cycles and features a braking mechanism that's designed to cut mechanical front and rear curtain vibration by up to 50%.



Battery

Two rechargeable NP-FW50 batteries, the same as those used in the Sony Alpha 7R, 7 II and 7S, are supplied with the Alpha 7R II. They're rated for 290 shots each when the EVF is used and 340 shots when users opt to use the screen. Extra batteries cost £65 each.

Memory card

The Sony Alpha 7R II has a single memory-card slot at the side. SDXC memory cards with a Class 10 or higher speed rating are required for XAVC S video recording and UHS Speed Class 3 is required for recording at 100Mbps.



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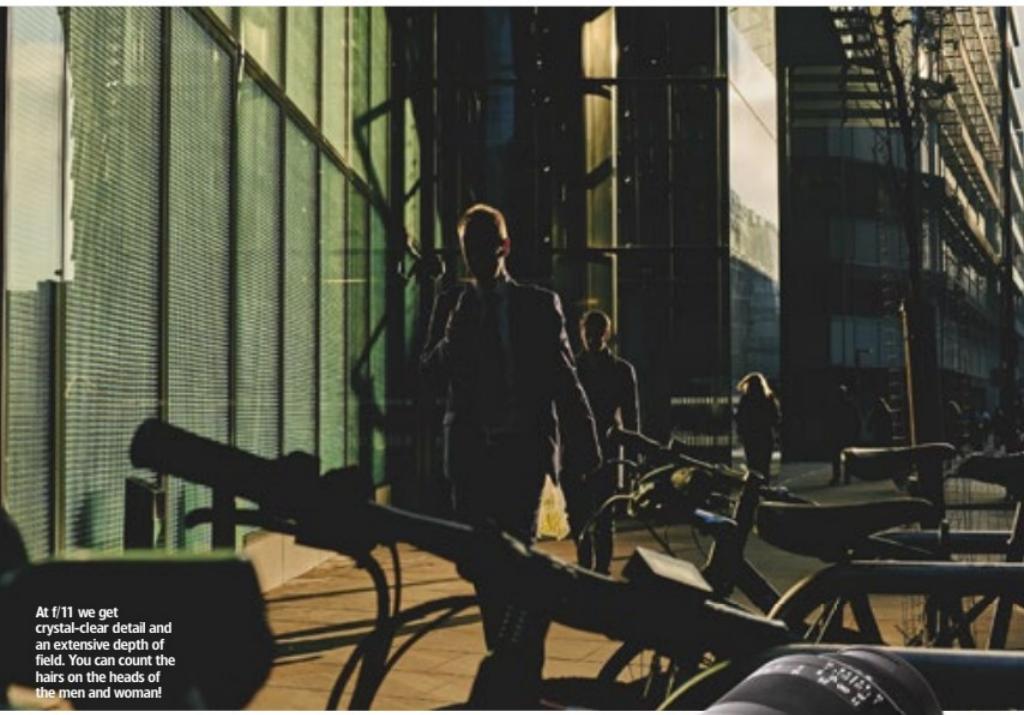
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At f/11 we get crystal-clear detail and an extensive depth of field. You can count the hairs on the heads of the men and woman!

Zeiss Milvus 50mm f/1.4

Standard lenses are supposed to be small, simple and relatively inexpensive, so why would you pay almost £1,000 for this beast and weigh your camera bag down? **Damien Demolder** finds out

If you're happy with a maximum aperture of f/1.8, standard lenses for full-frame cameras are usually reasonably priced, of good quality and compact enough to avoid adding weight or bulk to your camera set-up. Recently, however, there has been a growing trend for faster standard primes that carry a premium in price, weight and size.

This new Zeiss Milvus 50mm is one such lens – but it demands that premium and more. It's a monster of a lens, with a vast forward

element, a bulbous barrel and a weight that suggests it's smuggling lead. For most of us these characteristics will be placed firmly on the negative side of the balance sheet, so a lens like this needs to offer something very special just to even out the scales, let alone put the unit in a positive light.

This 50mm is part of a new range of lenses from Zeiss. All manual focus and with a striking family resemblance, the range is designed for Nikon and Canon users, and they provide a



covering circle extensive enough for full-frame sensors. While most of the Milvus family has been re-clothed and adapted from the previously existing Classic ZE/ZF.2 range, this 50mm f/1.4 and an 85mm f/1.4 are completely new optical designs. And the design of the 50mm f/1.4 needs to be pretty spectacular to make this lens worth the money.

Features

The Carl Zeiss Milvus 50mm f/1.4 is a manual-focus lens designed for Canon and Nikon camera owners with full-frame or APS-C sensors. A T* accreditation lets us know that the brightness of exposure at any of the apertures will match exactly that of the same aperture on any other T* lens. This point is perhaps more important to videographers than for stills workers. Zeiss has used ten elements in

'It's a joy to see such clean edges and not have to correct colour shifts and grey-line hangovers'

the construction, grouped into eight separate units, to create a retrofocal Distagon design, and has employed numerous special elements and surfaces to improve image quality. Six elements with aspheric surfaces are used, along with four in a low-dispersion glass that Zeiss calls 'anomalous partial dispersion' glass. This devotes itself to reducing the likelihood of colour fringes appearing along high-contrast edges.

Zeiss claims its correction of coma and spherical aberrations will ensure high-resolution capture right across the surface of the sensor. The T* surface coatings are designed to reduce flare and internal reflections so contrast can be maintained at a level that makes the most of the increasing dynamic range of modern imaging sensors – Nikon's in particular.

The company goes to great lengths to reduce the likelihood of light bouncing around inside the lens, including manually coating the outer edges of each element with black pitch. This is a delicate process that I've been lucky to witness with my own eyes.

Build and handling

I appreciate that this lens is a tool and as such its cosmetic aesthetic is unimportant to the purchaser driven entirely by logic. Few of us are unlucky enough to deny the attraction and importance of beauty, so I'll mention here that this lens is, as are all Milvus lenses, very pleasing to the eye. It would have been easy to make a straight-up-and-down cylinder with glass in it, but the designers have gone to some lengths to make something beyond basic necessity. The soft-sheen paint and wide rubber focus ring look fantastic, and the outline of the barrel and metal hood curve exquisitely.

As you might expect, the whole machine is made from metal, which lends both weight and stability to the construction. Even the lens hood, unlike so many of today's plastic versions, is solid and hard to the touch. There is soft, shallow-pile luxurious felt lining its interior surface.

The hood is massive, being 44mm high, 90mm across and a full 1mm thick, but its shape is perfect for turning back on itself when the lens is not in use, and it fits beautifully, and protectively, over the front end of the barrel. The front end of the barrel fans outwards slightly as it covers the front element, which provides a comfortable gripping point when the lens is being held – even with gloved hands.

Being a lens intended for movies as well as for stills, the manual-focus ring is designed to be easy to handle. It is 22mm wide, and made of a rubber that sticks to the fingers without the need for ribbing. The focus throw is extensive to allow for the tiny adjustments that are necessary with a wide-aperture lens – it



Great edge performance means we can use edges without the worry of lost resolution. This image was shot at f/5.6, where the lens performs at its best

needs a rotation of about 220° to take us from the 45cm/1.5ft closest focus position to infinity. Focus markings, along with a depth of field scale, are engraved on the barrel.

I was using the ZF.2 Nikon-mount version of the lens, which is fitted with an aperture ring. The ring offers half-stop clicks between f/1.4 and f/11, and then a full stop to f/16, although body control of the iris allows 1/6EV steps to be used. The Nikon version also lets us de-click the ring so we can change aperture during filming without intruding on the audio track.

While the lens does all it can to make life very pleasant indeed, there is nothing it can do about the lack of accommodation modern DSLRs allow for manual-focus systems. It is

almost impossible to focus by eye as the modern focus screen does nothing to assist, so we have to use the AF points and the focus confirmation dot in the viewfinder – or tripod-mounted magnified live view. The lens worked beautifully on my Nikon FM3A, though.

Performance

Carl Zeiss lenses are known for their ability to resolve detail. That, and the build, is what you pay the premium for. I think it is safe to say that this 50mm Milvus is the sharpest lens we've tested for some time, and the sharpest by some distance. Its wide-open performance eclipses most other 50mm lenses when they are set at their optimal apertures, but when



Detail



F/1.4 on Nikon D800E

Even when shot wide open at f/1.4, the Milvus shows exceptional resolution that's a match for modern high-resolution sensors. The main problem is focusing accurately enough

it is used at f/5.6 it is astonishingly good. Corner resolution, although behind the centre between f/1.4 and f/5.6, again eclipses some other lenses when their centre resolution is measured, so while I can't tell you that resolution is even across the frame at all settings, it doesn't ever drop to anything less than 'very good'. At all aperture settings, corner and centre resolution measurements are very similar, but they actually come together completely by f/4 and stay that way until f/16. Resolution peaks at f/5.6 and drops away to what we would normally class as 'excellent' at f/16. It really is very sharp indeed.

As with all fast lenses, corners don't always receive the same amount of light as the middle of the frame. The effect is dramatic at f/1.4 but only remains so for a stop, as brightness is evened out by f/2.8. I found the brightness of the frame changes considerably as it lightens noticeably at f/2 and drops back down at f/2.8.

The uneven illumination fools the matrix metering of the camera. The effect is that the middle of the frame actually gets darker at f/2, while the outer areas brighten up – like inverted vignetting.

The absence of chromatic fringing is noticeable in images that have high-contrast edges, so trees can maintain their natural colour appearance without the interference of purples, blues and greens. It's a joy to see such clean edges and not have to correct colour shifts and the grey-line hangovers they so often produce.

This is the pay-off we get from the size of the lens and the lengthened light path. Edges this clean really are quite unusual.

I can't tell you that the lens is completely free of curvilinear distortions, but you really have to test it hard to find them. The barrelling is so moderate that you need to find something very straight and shoot it right at the longest edges of the frame to be able to detect any deviance from normal.

Our verdict

WHETHER you want this lens will depend on how much you are prepared to spend on a standard lens, and a manual one at that. If you decide that you don't want to spend almost £1,000 on a standard lens it won't be because this lens isn't good value for money – just that it is a lot of money.

I began the test wondering how Zeiss could justify the asking price, despite its nice looks and quality build. I ended the test working out how much use I'd get from it if I bought one. It really is an exceptional piece of kit, and if sharpness, detail, clean edges and a delightful user experience are important to you, this lens was made with you in mind.

For moving subjects, your success will depend on your ability to focus quickly, or your acceptance of an all-encompassing depth of field. But for still subjects and tripod-mounted work there possibly isn't a finer tool on the market. It is intoxicatingly good.



AP

Data file

| |
|------------------------------|
| Price £949 |
| Diameter 67mm |
| Lens elements 10 |
| Groups 8 |
| Aperture f/1.4 |
| Minimum focus 45cm |
| Length 94mm |
| Diameter 82.9mm |
| Weight 922g |
| Lens mount Canon EF, Nikon F |

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Zeiss Milvus 50mm f/1.4

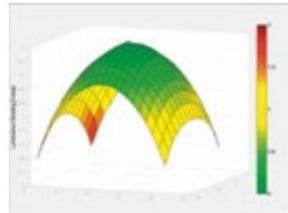
Resolution

There is no word for the resolution of this lens other than 'exceptional'. It performs as well wide open as most do closed to their optimal apertures, and at its own optimal aperture it is astonishing. Best at f/5.6, it is also excellent right through the aperture range. Rarely do we see fine-detail corner resolution matching centre resolution at all, let alone at a middle aperture like f/5.6.



Shading

Vignetting is dramatic at f/1.4, with 1.5 stops fall-off in illumination at the corners of the frame. It decreases slightly at f/2, but is for all intents and purposes gone by f/2.8 – or by f/4 for the particularly fussy. Again, this is an exceptional performance characteristic of a first-class lens.



Curvilinear distortion

For most of us there is no curvilinear distortion to talk about here. The amount of barrelling that exists is so small that only scientific users will need to take it into account, and the rest of us may not have fine enough increments in our correction software to remove it without introducing pincushion.

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Activate MF assist with a manual-focus lens by tapping the screen

Manual-focus matters

Q One of the benefits of using Sony's NEX-3N camera is the ability to use focus peaking and MF assist together when using either 'legacy' lenses or manual-focus lenses such as my Samyang 12mm f/2 and the Kelda 300mm f/6.3 mirror lens. I used the custom '?' button to call up the MF assist, when either of these lenses was attached to the camera, and both of these aids helped with manual focusing.

Seeing the Sony Alpha 5100 at a very attractive price in the Black Friday sales, I have purchased this camera as a replacement upgrade to the NEX-3N. The touchscreen (for focus point), and the improved sensor/processor made it the obvious choice, and I can use all my existing lenses with the new camera.

On the Alpha 5100, however, I am unable to allocate MF assist to the custom key settings '?' button, as it is not listed in the options for the custom button. I have selected the MF assist to 'on' in the custom settings menu, and it works fine with other lenses with electronic contacts and focus set to MF.

I notice the Alpha 5100 online help guide states that the MF assist function is available 'only when an E-mount lens is attached', so presumably this valuable function has been removed on the Alpha 5100, or am I missing something?

Derek Smith

A I've asked Sony UK about this and got the following response: 'Thanks to the A5100's touchscreen, the system is easier to use than the previous version. If the customer attaches his non-E-mount lens, he needs to enable "release without lens". Once he does this, the camera will assume that a non-electronic lens has been attached and will behave differently. He can tap any area of the screen to expand focus, and he can set the custom "?" key to turn on focus peaking or adjust the level (provided he sets "?" to the custom key option to "peakaving level"). This means he will be able to access the functions he desires more quickly, and have a greater control over which area of the frame is expanded to manually focus.'

So it appears you should be able to activate MF assist with a manual-focus lens simply by tapping the area of interest on the screen. **Andy Westlake**

Looking for a lens

Q I am trying to decide whether to buy the AF-S Nikkor 24-120mm f/4G ED VR lens for my Nikon D810. I'm looking for something I can use as a 'walkabout' lens. Do you think it's worth me spending £729 of my hard-earned cash on one, or would you say I'm better off looking at alternatives?

Jeff RICHES

A There's a lot to be said for owning an excellent walkabout lens. By relying on one lens mounted to your camera, you can save yourself the hassle of carrying many prime lenses covering different focal lengths. They're ideal for day trips and keeping your bag light when you need it to be. As well as saving time switching lenses, less lens swapping means there's less risk

G-Tech's fast USB 3.0 interface suits the storage of high-resolution images



Hard drive on a budget

Q I recently attempted to download my images, only to find that I've run out of disk space on my external hard drive. I'm after a high-capacity storage device that's compatible with my iMac, but I'm working to a strict £150 budget and wondered if you had any recommendations? Capacity is more important for me than speed, although I would like my next hard drive to feature a USB 3.0 interface. **Tony Jenkins**

A I recommend taking a look at the G-Tech 4TB G-DRIVE USB – a hard drive that features an impressively fast USB 3.0 interface, as well as 7200rpm performance that's well matched to storing high-resolution image files. The drive is Mac OS-compatible and you'll find that the all-aluminium enclosure complements the look and style of your Apple iMac. I bought one of these hard drives for personal use about a year ago as a back-up drive and I've been thoroughly impressed with its performance.

The build quality is superior to many desktop hard drives that have a plastic outer casing, and it runs efficiently and quietly in use. The only quirk is the extremely bright light on the front, so you may find yourself mounting it sideways on your desk to solve this issue, like I did. Best of all, it's a hard drive that represents fantastic value for money and meets your budget perfectly at its current price of £150. **Michael Topham**

of dust reaching the sensor. There are no strict rules as to what constitutes the best walkabout focal length, and Nikon has a couple of FX lenses that fit the bill – the AF-S Nikkor 24-120mm f/4G ED VR and the longer AF-S Nikkor 28-300mm f/3.5-5.6G ED VR (£599). If you'd prefer your lens to be slightly wider than longer, with a fixed aperture of f/4 through its

zoom range, the AF-S Nikkor 24-120mm f/4G ED VR makes a fine choice. The Sigma 24-105mm f/4 DG OS HSM (£679) is an alternative, but you won't get as close to distant subjects at the long end of the zoom. Although many retailers are selling the lens you're looking at for £729, we found it cheaper at Castle Cameras – £649 at the time of writing. **Michael Topham**

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In the bag

Russ Barnes is a creative landscape photographer with a passion for trees. Here he reveals his lightweight camera set-up for when he's constantly on the go. Visit www.russbarnes.co.uk



Billingham Hadley Small shoulder bag

1 Carrying less forces me to think more about lens choice. It means I usually only take a two-lens kit or small primes with me on a shoot. This bag allows me to access my kit easily while remaining mobile.

Nikon Df

2 The 16MP sensor's high ISO performance is so good it means that slow shutter speed is rarely a problem – it's like carrying around a mini Nikon D4. The Df is only 765g, but leaving the tripod at home is the ultimate weight saving here.

Nikon 50mm f/1.2 AI-s

3 Nikon's 35-year-old all-manual, alt-metal forgotten gem, with wafer-thin depth of field, is a lovely creative lens in a 360g compact. Because there are no AF motors in these old AI-s lenses, they are light and almost guaranteed to last a lifetime. Gorgeous glass!

Zeiss 100mm f/2 ZF.2

4 I have three all-manual Zeiss ZF.2 primes and they are of exquisite quality. The rendering, draw and colour saturation you get from Zeiss are a photographer's dream. This lens can do 2:1 close-focus macro while also performing as a stunning telephoto for landscape work.



Lee 105mm Landscape Polariser

5 With the incredible dynamic range of the Df, I stopped using grads some time ago, but I never leave home without a polariser. It's a big polariser, but has a slight warm tone that lends itself well to landscapes, and deals with reducing reflections and glare flawlessly.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Agfa Super Silette

Ivor Matanle looks back at a 1950s 35mm film rangefinder

LAUNCHED 1955

PRICE £36.89d [£36.43]

PRICE £25-£50

INTRODUCED in 1955, the Agfa Super Silette was, in the age of coupled rangefinder cameras, the logical and very successful development of the popular Agfa Silette 35mm viewfinder camera.

Most commonly found now in the UK with a 45mm f/3.5 Apotar in Prontor SVS shutter, the premium version of the Super Silette in 1955 had a 45mm f/3.5 four-element (Tessar type) Solinar lens in a Synchro Compur shutter. In 1956, Agfa introduced what is now regarded as the most collectable model, with a six-element 50mm f/2 Solagon lens in Synchro Compur, one of which I used when shooting photographs for my book, *Collecting and Using Classic Cameras*, during the 1980s. However, the f/3.5 Solinar delivers superbly crisp negatives.

What's good Brilliantly bright rangefinder and viewfinder, high optical quality from the Agfa Solinar lens.

What's bad Not much.



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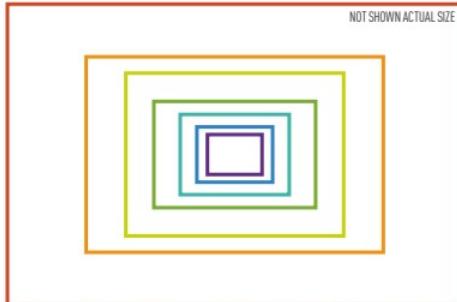
Full-frame flagships

Bob Newman looks at the advantages of the larger full-frame sensor

At the top end of the camera market there seems to be a concerted move, at least among the top three manufacturers, towards 'full frame' or, in more precise terms, '135 format full frame'. With a flurry of new-generation releases expected in 2016 from the two major manufacturers, the discussion surrounding new 'flagships' is beginning to warm up. The likelihood of an APS-C or DX (depending on brand) flagship should generate considerable discussion, so it's worth considering what a larger sensor brings.

It's often reasoned that a larger sensor brings higher image quality, and that's true, up to a point. If we think of image quality being defined broadly by resolution and noise, then the larger sensor will often win on resolution, simply because the lenses don't have to be as sharp, since they'll be subject to less enlargement.

The issue of noise is slightly more complex. The major source of noise in digital photography is the particle nature of light itself. Light can be viewed either as continuous waves, or as particles or quanta of energy called photons. A digital camera is



A larger sensor can gather more light and form a less noisy image

fundamentally a quantum device. Photons reflected by the scene being photographed are directed onto the sensor, where they dislodge electrons in the silicon, causing a charge to accumulate. This charge is proportional to the number of photons that have impacted and thus the amount of light. That charge is measured, pixel by pixel, to build up an image. However, the photons arrive randomly, so if just a few are collected, the image appears noisy. If there are many, the irregularity evens out and the

tones in the picture appear smooth. Fundamentally, the noise in an image depends on the amount of light used to make it.

That is the advantage of a larger sensor – it can gather more light and form a less noisy image. But saying that it can is not the same as saying it has to. Often, photography is practised when there are constraints that limit how much light can be captured. If you need depth of field, the light captured is limited by the small aperture needed. If you're trying to prevent motion blur, then light captured is limited by the shutter speed. If you're constraining both depth of field and shutter speed, then the amount of light captured is constrained, and the noise in the image is set, regardless of sensor size. Only if you are free from those constraints will the larger sensor produce a less noisy image.

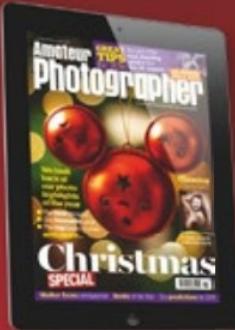
So, its advantage is not higher quality but a larger shooting envelope [the conditions under which a camera will work optimally] within which higher quality can be achieved, but only if you have the freedom to choose shallow depth of field or slow shutter speeds.



Ultra-fast lenses, such as this Sigma, widen the shooting envelope of APS-C systems by making shallower depth of field available

Bob Newman is currently professor of computer science at the University of Wolverhampton. He has been working with the design and development of high-technology equipment for 35 years, and two of his products have won innovation awards. Bob is also a camera nut and a keen amateur photographer.

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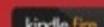


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|  <p>Nikon D610 24.3 megapixels 6.0fps 1080p movie mode Full Frame DXCMOS</p> <p>£999 From £999</p> |  <p>Nikon D750 24.3 megapixels 6.5fps 1080p movie mode Full Frame DXCMOS</p> <p>£1396 From £1396</p> |  <p>Nikon D810 36.3 megapixels 5.0fps Full Frame DXCMOS</p> <p>£2349 From £2349</p> |  <p>Nikon D4s 16.2 megapixels 11.0fps Full Frame DXCMOS</p> <p>£4449 Body</p> |
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| <small>Read our D810 review on our blog at wex.co.uk/blog</small> | | | |
| <small>CUSTOMER REVIEW: D4s Body ★★★★★ "Spectacular Camera" Charlie Delta - Hertfordshire</small> | | | |

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| <small>Panasonic Cashback* offer ends 25.1.16</small> | | | |

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|  <p>Olympus OM-D E-M1 Black or Silver 16.3 megapixels 10.0fps 1080p movie mode</p> <p>£849 From £849</p> |  <p>Olympus E-M10 II Black or Silver 16.3 megapixels 8.5fps 1080p movie mode</p> <p>£549 From £549</p> |  <p>Pentax K-3 II Black or Silver 24.3 megapixels 8.0fps 1080p movie mode</p> <p>£749 From £749</p> |  <p>Fujifilm X-E2 Black or Silver 16.3 megapixels 7.0fps 1080p movie mode</p> <p>£499 From £499</p> |
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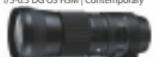
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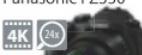
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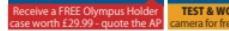
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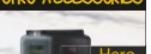
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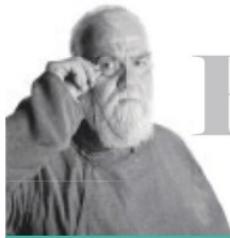


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Final Analysis

Roger Hicks considers...

Edith Piaf, Paris, 1961, by Nicolas Tikhomiroff

If you do not know who Piaf was; if you do not know that, in this image, she is about to go on stage at Paris's Olympia music hall; if you do not know that she is already ravaged by a decade of morphine and alcohol addiction after a serious car crash in 1951; if you do not know that, two years later, in 1963, she will be dead at 47; if you do not know any of this, what does this picture say?

If you do know about her, of course, then the opening bars of her most famous song are probably already running in your head: 'Non, rien de rien, non, je ne regrette rien.' You probably know that *piaf* means sparrow. The tiny woman with the incredible voice was the greatest chanteuse of all time, but really, you have to know all this before you can fully appreciate the picture.

Compositionally it is brilliant. Light against dark (her left side) in the same composition as dark against light (her right side) almost always works as long as there is adequate differentiation, as there is here. Cover up that streak of light on the left with your hand, though, and suddenly the picture is vastly weaker. One of the first things we learn in portraiture is to avoid distracting backgrounds, but all too often we then move on to bland backgrounds. The perfect background complements our subjects without dominating them. Here we have dazzling brilliance against absolute blackness – a perfect metaphor for Piaf's life.

Technically, it is perfect too. Not perfect in the sense that an immaculately lit large-format shot would be perfect, but in the sense that it gives us the impression of being there, of glimpsing something (and someone) magical. Exacting technical perfection in the large-format sense would detract from that immediacy. Perfection is very often a matter of what is appropriate – which is not the same as maximum sharpness, subtle tonal distribution or any other 'camera-club criterion'.

Now let's go back to the questions raised in the first paragraph. Even if we don't know who it is, or where, it's still a very striking picture. Add a caption: *Mme Quelqu'un*, the famous actress, about to go on stage. At least this explains the lighting and provides some context. Now add that



she always suffers from stage fright, and has to pause before she goes on. The Magnum notes accompanying the picture tell us exactly this. Immediately, many of us will identify with her a little more. Then

break the news that it was Piaf...

A picture may be worth a thousand words. But sometimes, a handful of words can make a picture a thousand times more meaningful.

Roger Hicks has been writing about photography since 1981 and has published more than three dozen books on the subject, many in partnership with his wife Frances Schultz (visit his website at www.rogerandfrances.com). Every week in this column Roger deconstructs a classic or contemporary photograph. Next week he considers an image by Michael Michlmayr



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